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ABSTRACT

This document presents three papers by scholars who participated in a lecture series on current controversies regarding politics and the arts. Judith H. Balfe argues in her paper, "Affinities of Art and Politics: Gilt by Association," that despite a history of institutional separateness, art and politics are linked with one another because they both establish hierarchies of power. This affinity is demonstrated by use of contemporary examples that link politics to the museum world. Edward C. Banfield's paper, "Art and the Public Interest," offers an argument for the inappropriateness of public subsidy for the arts. The premise is based on an interpretation that places federal support for the arts outside the delegated powers of the U.S. Constitution. Ralph A. Smith suggests in his paper, "Reshaping Policy for Arts Education," that arts education policy in schools is fraught with efforts to solve social, political, or economic problems rather than to serve truly educational ends. (Author/DB)

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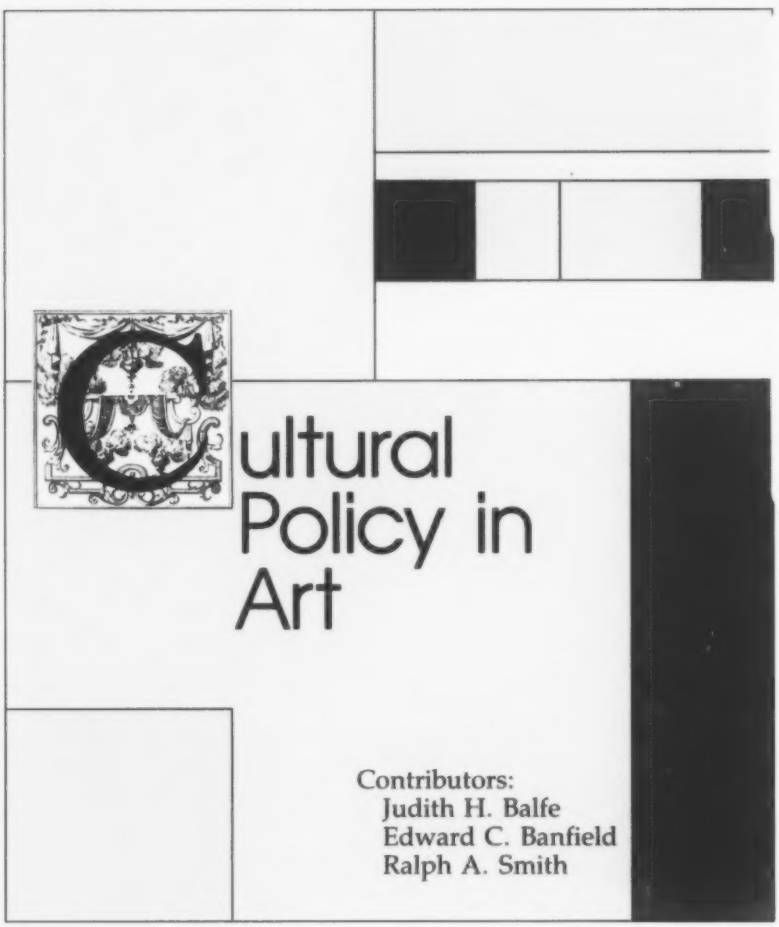

Cultural Policy in Art

Contributors:
Judith H. Balfe
Edward C. Banfield
Ralph A. Smith

Journal of the Department of Art Education ◇ University of Oregon

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Issue Topic

Cultural Policy and Art

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Editorial

Rogena M. Degge

This is the premiere issue of *Controversies in Art & Culture*. The journal was established by the faculty of the Department of Art Education, University of Oregon, in order to publish lectures and papers on salient matters regarding art and culture. The journal is intended to promote discourse regarding the cultural role, impact, and meaning of the arts in society.

This issue centers on the topic of Cultural Policy in Art. It is well known that arts policies may be explicit or implicit, from local to international levels. Most certainly they are dynamic. They mark diverse values held about art and reflect a perceived importance of the arts to various aspects of society. Arts policies can influence artistic, economic, political, and social opportunity; cultural maintenance and transmission; cultural advancement; history and current trends of the arts; attitudes about the arts; access to the arts; and knowledge to be obtained about the arts. Arts policies may determine the nature and character of arts delivered to a community, the development of the aesthetic welfare of a society, and career opportunities in the arts. Arts policies may reflect the aesthetic values which hold social power, the importance of the arts to society, the educational importance of the arts, and how we organize the aesthetic aspects of human existence. Arts policies exist both for the public and cultural good. In the United States, *public* policies are generally based in economic or political motivation. *Cultural* policy would be concerned with advancing the cultural life of individuals, through opportunity and education.

This issue presents 3 papers which comprised a department lecture series regarding current controversies regarding policies and the arts. Political, economic, ideological and educational matters are addressed which link art to cultural concerns. Judith H. Balfe argues that "despite a tradition of institutional disaffiliation of the arts and politics in America, they retain an elective affinity with each other because — unlike the democratic leveling processes of our technocratic society, carried by the mass media — both the arts and politics establish hierarchies of power." Balfe demonstrates this elective affinity using contemporary examples which link politics to the museum world through mutual advantage. International art exchanges and blockbuster exhibitions, involving the United States and Japan, China, England, Egypt, Russia, and others, are presented as evidence. Significant, aesthetic power of artworks is proposed as a primary criterion where collaboration of art and politics provides mutual advantage.

Edward C. Banfield offers an argument for the inappropriateness of public interpretation which places federal support for the arts outside the delegated powers of the constitution. He believes that "the principle concern of government ought to be with the public interest, not the general welfare" of citizens. The National Endowment for the Arts, for example, has not demonstrated it functions in the public interest. We

must recognize, he proposes, that the "claim for governmental intervention must cut both ways: if government should support some art on public interest grounds then, in principle, it should suppress some on the same grounds."

Ralph A. Smith is concerned with errors in policy thinking which he labels the sentimentalizing, politicizing, bureaucratizing, and fashionabilizing of cultural and educational matters. Basic policy questions to be examined must account for these mistakes in thinking as well as for the current nature and character of art. He suggests that arts educational policy is fraught with efforts to solve social, political, or economic problems rather than to serve truly educational ends. Are we, he asks, "content, as we are in so many other sectors of society today, to settle for the principles of a no-fault morality?" Or, do we establish policy to reflect the importance of educating people to learn the "capacity of art to induce a high level of aesthetic experience, to stimulate the powers of percipience, and to yield understanding."

The next issue of *Controversies in Art & Culture* will have as a topic focus Art and Law and should be available for purchase mid-year of 1988. We hope readers will use this journal as a format for commentary on controversial points of view so that we may establish such an exchange as part of this journal's future function. Please send commentary to the editor.

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Affinities of Art and Politics: Gilt By Association

Judith H. Balfe

The analytical and institutional autonomy of art has been posited as an ideal, and in time, has been assumed to exist in contemporary society. Art is to be free of demands to serve non-aesthetic ends; it will be true to its own social purpose if it serves only itself. My purpose here is to reconsider the implications of insisting upon this autonomy, as I believe it inhibits our understanding of the empirical world in which art mixes with politics, commerce, religion, and science, in a variety of aggregates, amalgams, and mutually productive (or destructive) affinities. We may need to maintain the distinctions methodologically, in order to better understand the combinations, but we should neither expect nor perhaps welcome a decontextualized "art-for-art's-sake," supposedly as universal and objective as science.

To be sure, anthropologists and social psychologists have argued that aesthetic experience is universal across cultures (Alland, 1977; Child, 1969). But however universal, it is also quite particular and individualized. Recent psychological investigation into "multiple intelligences" has scientifically validated the common sense understanding of different types of intelligence, respectively located in different parts of the brain, which appear in different distributions in and among individuals (Gardner, 1983). Some people are endowed with greater musical, visual spatial, or kinesthetic "intelligence" than others (hence become artists and even virtuosi in music, visual art, dance). Others are specifically talented in language or in logic/mathematics, those qualities most measured in standard I.Q. tests. Any innate endowment of any specialized intelligence may be fostered or thwarted by the cultural context, of course, and our rationalized, techno-bureaucratic culture demonstrably favors those who are gifted in language and math over those who are not. It is understandable, then, that given our highly developed division of labor and the institutions which foster it, those with special artistic "intelligences" have welcomed the specialization of each field and the underlying ideology of their inherent autonomy. Rather than being overwhelmed by the predominating calculation of post-industrial culture, those in the arts have often wanted to stand apart from it in order to stand against the rationalizing, quantifying purposes of "this-worldly" commerce or politics, or the mystical "other-worldly" purposes of religion (Weber, 1973).

Science too has insisted upon a similar separation from politics, religion, and economics, in order to be true to its own peculiar genius or demon. But because science — including the social sciences — aims at objectivity while the arts are inherently subjective, most social science inquiry into the arts accepts their disciplinary autonomy and focuses almost entirely on "artworlds" and the historical, sociological, and political practices of the individuals and collectivities who make them up (Becker, 1982). By usually refusing to consider at the same time the *arts* which are the purpose of art world activities, paradoxically social science accepts the "art-for-art's-sake" claim of the arts which its own genius should otherwise

deny. Certainly some art may be universal or transcendent, "above" the partialities of particular contexts. However, all art remains a human product, socially constructed, indeterminate, relative, and value-laden. Unlike the objective factuality of science, the purposed "uselessness" of the arts is to create and interpret particular meanings for individuals in socially-sharable ways. That such meaning may be unquantifiable may make it elusive for social science, but it should not make it utterly inaccessible.

In any event, whether or not art is seen as a secular alternative to religion in expressing the most profound truths of the human condition, the aesthetic perspective of "art-for-art's-sake" is also an ethic, that is, it has quite non-aesthetic consequences which are inevitably political, involving power relations between individuals or larger collectivities. Just as the political values and institutions of the wider society affect the creation and patronage of the arts (McWilliams, 1985), in less obvious ways aesthetic values affect politics. Whether the arts are experienced as symbolizing and expressing freedom or restraint, the uniqueness of the individual or the power of the collectivity, release from the wider society, or commitment to its institutions, the consequences are great and complex and raise socio-political questions of social control far beyond matters of "mere" aesthetics.

In our society whose institutions of religious practice depend so much upon a pluralistic "secular humanism," it is sometimes hard to acknowledge the degree to which religion is the matrix of both art and politics. In pre-literate society (all of the human history until the last few lifetimes), the arts have been the primary means by which religious (and political) elites have symbolized and communicated the overarching truths and values that hold the society together, as the arts have not required widespread literacy for their understanding. Even in post-modern society, with its emphasis upon linguistic and quantitative intelligence, the arts remain the foremost expression of common culture — as Gilson says, of "mind speaking to mind; not knowledge to knowledge" (1968). Despite a tradition of institutional disaffiliation of the arts and politics in America, they retain an elective affinity with each other (and with religion) if only because — unlike the democratic leveling processes of our technocratic society, carried by the mass media — both the arts and politics establish hierarchies of power. Providing systems of rank from good to bad, more to less, both the arts and politics are inherently potentially "elitist," insisting that all are not "equal." In that similarity, they find a mutual attraction, and the possibility of mutual support.

However we may agree on all of this at the level of abstraction at which I have been presenting it, we will find ourselves in greater controversy when we consider the linkages of art and political *institutions* — both processes and organizations. The quite literal institutionalization of artistic charisma in museums, orchestras, theater, or ballet companies makes them prone to processes of routinization and quantification—i.e., to bureaucratization—which are antithetical to individual creativity. So, too, we find the institutionalization of religious or political charisma in organizations of churches or governments, although these have never had as

individualizing a purpose as have the arts. Compounding the problem for the arts, today, is the fact that all organized institutions—artistic or otherwise—are linked via their mutual dependence upon *technologically* - mediated bureaucratic practices. Do we not then make everything worse for the arts if we foster their dependence upon governmental institutions? Will they not then be coopted, subverted, and overwhelmed by the Big Guns, the Big Bucks, and the Big Red Tape of the post-industrial state?

On the other hand, if we deny any and all such linkages, do we not consign the arts forever to insignificance, denying them the opportunity or the requirement to address, even as antagonists, the deepest social issues?

My role as sociologist in this discussion is not to take one side or the other so much as to try to clarify our understanding of the issues. Certainly the evidence is overwhelmingly that a passion for both the arts and for other forms of power is frequently found in the same individual, from Maecenas, Shah Jahan, Lorenzo de Medici, Louis XIV to Nelson Rockefeller, Norton Simon, or Armand Hammer. Equally overwhelming is the historical evidence that institutions of art and politics are related. To state their affinity does not reduce either side to the other, of course, nor does it deny that their purposes are, at times, incompatible. Rather, such a statement allows us to examine instances where the respective ends of the arts and arts institutions, and of politics and government, have been served compatibly. In such cases, each stands semi-autonomously as rival "reality principle" by which to judge the other. We can contrast successful arts/politics alliances with instances where their respective ends were not both accommodated, and hopefully come to some generalizable conclusions beyond the empirical matter I present as examples.

I will be concerned here specifically with museum exhibitions, especially "blockbusters," whose sponsorship makes it clear that they are instruments of state politics and propaganda. It must be understood that *not* all recent blockbusters are politically motivated (e.g., the recent Renoir show in Boston; the current Impressionist show in Washington). Indeed, despite much internal and extramural politicking in the museum world, most museum exhibitions honor the a-politicality of the "art for art's sake" ethic. Because this is the rule rather than the exception, because great artworks *are* perceived to be transcendent and above politics, governments find justification for staging certain shows for their own purposes. For those who fear the heavy hand of governmental involvement in the arts, as well as for those who fear instead that the arts will subvert the purposes of the state, what reassuring or cautionary lessons can be learned from such case studies? When has the affinity of art and politics been mutually advantageous, and when not — and why?

Let us first remind ourselves of the role of public museums which contributes to their institutional affinities with the political purposes of the modern state. From their founding on the basis of private (royal, aristocratic, or religious) collections, public museums are "leveling" institutions, bringing art to "the people" and thus presumably enriching their lives and uniting them in a common "higher" culture. At the same

time, museums enshrine particular works as great and deny such legitimation to others. Such "official" hierarchies are increasingly under dispute (e.g., controversies over greater inclusion of "women's art" or "black folk art" [Metcalf, 1985]). On principle, such hierarchies are based upon aesthetic quality only, so works from all peoples are displayed out of context, stripped of religious, political, or practical use, set off from the contamination of the world by the halo of a gold frame. Denied at the same time are the rich, particularized contexts which provided the human experience which the art itself originally encapsulated and spoke to, in the interests of more universal, transcendent experience.

For many in any contemporary museum audience, increasingly sophisticated about the arts, a pure aesthetic experience facilitated by such museum "framing" is both possible and deeply moving, taking them out of their mundane, everyday worlds. But for those who are less sophisticated or simply less endowed with artistic "intelligences" (and here we would agree are the vast majority of the public), the deliberate vacuum of context which the modern museum insists upon cries out to be filled with non-aesthetic purposes which enriched and were enriched by most art to begin with. Usually, first to have been stripped by the secularized "temple of art" museum setting is any sectarian religious meaning to artworks (how often do even the devout cross themselves before altarpieces in museums?). Gone as well into the mists of the historic past are most factional political meanings. All the more readily, then, does the aesthetic power of museum-framed art draw to it the more familiar secular and economic power plays of individual or collective status seeking. Not surprisingly, like individual patrons, both corporations and governments seek the reflected glory, the gilt by association, with artworks supposedly beyond price and above politics. At the same time, such sponsors seek to re-embed the decontextualized art in wider systems of meaning which they (more or less) control. The less aesthetically-aware the audience, the more likely the recontextualizing is to occur according to the sponsors' agenda.

Our discussion, then, must consider questions of the audience as well as the art involved in the exchanges of art exhibitions between the United States and various foreign states during the last several decades. In fact, we will need to keep four "variables" in mind to demonstrate their interaction. First, of course, we must look at the obvious political purposes of both sponsoring parties to the exchange. (After all, the host legitimates the guest as much as vice versa.) Second, we must ask about the intended audience: Is this museum exhibition to be a blockbuster to attract the mass public, or is it of appeal largely to sophisticated elites only? Third, we must note the "received" interpretation of the exhibited works as constructed by accompanying catalogues, labels, critical reviews, and wider press coverage. Finally, we cannot avoid an assessment of the aesthetic qualities of the artworks themselves, whether subtle or obvious, powerful or weak. If sponsors and audience are indeed to benefit from reflected glory, there must be some genuine glory there with which to start.

While temporary exhibitions of blockbuster proportions have become

increasingly necessary for museums to maintain their local economic and political stability, smaller shows which appeal to sophisticated elites can be just as important for international politics if given proper interpretation by the press: The *size* of the audience in and of itself is not crucial. Of special significance here is *The New York Times*, the newspaper par excellence of the educated cosmopolitan classes—either directly or as mediated by editors and critics of regionally-based papers or the electronic media. (Because of its national influence as "the newspaper of permanent record," I am here specially concerned with whether or not *The Times* interprets a loan show as propaganda or as pure art. That interpretation always depends upon its reading of the international politics involved, the size and characteristics of the intended audience, and, of course, on its assessment of the aesthetic power of the art. So, too, am I addressing these issues, but one step further removed from *The Times*.)

At outset, it must be recognized that the museum blockbuster with political motivation is not just a product of the Cold War or more recent political and economic strains in the international world order. The 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in Britain first demonstrated that the masses could be attracted to supposedly arcane, exotic, and previously unknown foreign cultural artifacts; every World's Fair since has built upon this precedent, mixing popular and previously-understood-to-be elite arts for common consumption. By the 1930's, loan shows from European museums had been common in the United States, and during World War II, Nelson Rockefeller (then with the Latin American desk at the State Department) arranged to have several exhibitions of contemporary art from the collections of the Museum of Modern Art tour Latin America as evidence of the substantive quality of "Yanqui" culture — evidently a tour with some success. Immediately after the war, international art exchanges increased in frequency and often with political or economic considerations. So European Old Masters toured museums in the United States, to huge audiences, as an expression of gratitude for American efforts to save Europe from Hitler. At the same time, any suspicions of NATO or the United Nations were lulled.

With the onset of the Cold War, Abstract Expressionist works were sent on tour of Europe to demonstrate that such utter freedom of expression was fostered by American capitalism (Cockcroft, 1974; Guilbault, 1984; Larson, 1983). However a- or even anti-political were such works and the artists who created them at that time, the political message of artistic freedom was widely believed. (This would seem to be the main reason for the resentment of leftist critics such as Cockcroft and Guilbault at their use in this manner: As propaganda, they worked!)

It is one thing for the United States to use art to cement political alliances with Western or Latin states, with whom it shared a common cultural heritage. But it was another thing with Japan, suddenly post-war to be understood as friend rather than enemy. Could art serve diplomatically to ease the traditional animosity and discrimination practiced toward Asians, especially on the West Coast? Could it speak to the guilt felt by the more sensitive as a result of the war-time incarceration of Japanese-American citizens, the appropriation of their properties, and the destruction caused by the atomic bomb?

Japanese Art and American Audiences

Given the general incomprehensibility of the Asian mind and culture to the West, both Japanese and American governments evidently felt that art could contribute to improved understanding, and in 1953 a large exhibit of classical Japanese art opened in the nation's capital, before traveling to Seattle, Chicago, and Boston. In order to monitor and evaluate its success in affecting the political attitudes of its American audiences, a team of social scientists conducted a study under the sponsorship of the Japan Society to assess the audience response. It is the only such instance I have found of an adequate study of the impact of any such exhibition upon the political attitudes of the audience. As such, and because its findings underlie the distinction I have made above between elite and mass audiences as an important variable in any analysis of the political efficacy of art, it is worth recounting the study in some detail. In addition, it provides a base by which to determine the greater efficacy of more recent "diplomatic" museum exhibitions.

The researchers, Bower and Sharpe (1956), distributed 6,500 questionnaires to audience members before and after they attended the show, and conducted interviews with some 700 visitors in Seattle, Chicago, and Boston. Generally, audience response varied according to city, as did the publicity which surrounded the exhibition. In Seattle, it was considered "a public event of great importance." The city had never before hosted such a major international exhibition. Moreover, like other West coast cities, Seattle had a long history of prejudice toward the Japanese. Publicized as having more-than-artistic significance, the show attracted a mass audience of 73,000 — one out of every seven Seattle adults. In Chicago and Boston, however, both cities being more frequently on the circuit for traveling art shows and also both having less traditional animosity toward (and a smaller population of) the Japanese, the exhibition was publicized, respectively, as "a major exhibit" and as "just another art show." Hence it was described as being of interest primarily to the already educated museum-goer and art lover, i.e., the elite audience. Accordingly, it attracted only one out of every 67 adults in Chicago and one out of every 82 in Boston. Here, then, is a test case for the argument that the same artworks may not affect the attitudes of elite and mass audiences in the same way.

In fact, the mass audience in Seattle remained largely uncomprehending or disappointed. A full third said that they had learned nothing about the Japanese, while another fifth came away with unfavorable ideas. In contrast, the elite audiences of Chicago and Boston had more positive responses, and reported learning more—but they already had attitudes favorable to the Japanese which had motivated them to attend in the first place. In sum, both the aesthetic and political "good will" purposes of the exhibition failed for the masses who had been attracted by what we now call "blockbuster hype" to a "media event." The aesthetic ends were successfully served for elite audiences, but even here, any political impact was nil. Regardless of audience type, the exhibition primarily reinforced previously-held attitudes toward the Japanese.

Given this expensive and rather negative finding, it is no wonder that

successive international exhibitions have not been comparably studied, even as their economic impacts are examined in great detail. Still, the finding demonstrated all too clearly that if propagandistic intentions are to be realized through art exhibitions, greater efforts would be needed to anticipate the possibly indeterminate and differing responses of different audiences, and hence to control for effect in the planning of any future art exchanges, whether targeted at elite or mass audiences.

It was not until 1974, nearly two decades after this Japanese exhibit and nearly one decade after the founding of the National Endowment for the Arts, that the United States government began systematically to plan and control such exhibits, establishing a new position of Arts Advisor in the State Department. A year later, Congress passed a bill whereby the federal government agreed to cover up to $50 million in insurance costs per show for exchange exhibitions certified by the State Department to be in the national interest, in addition to providing indemnification for the loaners of any artworks against lawsuits that might be filed against them by other foreign states. Such coverage has enabled international loan shows to continue, as host museums are no longer responsible for insurance that they could no longer afford. But, at the same time, it has relegated power of purse and permission to stage such shows at all to the state, rather than retaining it in the international art historical and museum community.

Additional governmental support for international art exchanges has come from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has helped to fund a number of such shows recently. (At the same time, the amount of this governmental support for the arts must not be overstated: The combined budget for the National Endowment for the Arts and *all* of the various "arts diplomacy" programs is lower than the figure allocated for military bands in the over-all defense budget.) In any case, in the last 10 years the American context for international art exchanges has become more and more politicized, even as the exchanges themselves have become more sophisticated in controlling for the inter-active effects of the four "variables" discussed earlier.

Fund Raising and Political (De)Legitimation: "Tut" and Israeli Art

The developmental history of the politicized blockbuster can be illustrated against the background of shifts in American relations with the Arabs and the Israelis. In the "pre-political" period of cultural exchanges, in 1963, Egypt sent 36 objects from Tutankhamen's tomb on a Smithsonian-sponsored nationwide tour, to raise money for the relocation of Abu Simbel, scheduled to be flooded by the rising waters behind the Aswan Dam. With such a relatively low-keyed agenda, the exhibition consisted of artworks that were precious in size and material; it was given scholarly treatment in catalogue and press coverage; it attracted an audience of connoisseurs and sophisticates rather than the "masses."

In contrast, consider the blockbuster exhibition of 1976-9, with 55 larger and more impressive objects, a much higher price tag (which became part of the publicity and the media event which the exhibition was intended to be), a very much larger mass audience and, of course, the much more

politicized atmosphere of the time. It was no accident that the Egyptians agreed to this show (mediated as well by the State Arts Advisor) at that time when Sadat was negotiating the Camp David accords and the American public was to be weaned away from the notion that Arabs in general and Egyptians in particular were less civilized than Israelis. Full press coverage of the finances involved carried the latent message that the Egyptians were participants in the Western economic order and accepted its capitalistic ethos; more overtly, with scholarly disclaimers that there could by any political agenda behind this exhibition, the Egyptians were depicted as the founders of Western civilization. At the same time, the show celebrated the romance of British (imperialistic) archeology. By publicizing their primacy in discovery, Sadat symbolically reached an accord with the British as well.

Obviously, compared to the earlier Tut exhibition, there was much greater scale on all four of the variables I listed at outset: the aesthetic power and overwhelming quality of the artworks, the size of the intended audience; the complexity and importance of the political agenda, and the public interpretation of it all by the media. If the works had been less powerful, merely as elegant and subtle as in the first exhibition, they would have been less able to live up to the hype which attracted the ignorant and the insensitive—as had happened in Seattle with the 1953 Japanese show. And in turn, much of the economic and political effects would have been diminished: Certainly the 8 million in audience and $16 million in world-wide profit would have been lower.

Additionally, there was an enhanced "scale" in the very staging of the later Tut show. Not only was big business involved in various commercial spin-offs, granted (or not) "official" imprimature by the museums which accepted and sold various items of "Tut-mania" at the shops which, in turn, contribute ever increasing monies to the always-strained museum budgets. But, a team of Smithsonian observers traveled with the show, building expertise on crowd control from one site to the next; Ticketron handled the national distribution of admission slots; host cities calculated profits to such ancillary institutions as restaurants just as host museums gleefully added up their own profits (e.g., $1.5 million to the Seattle museum). In sum, status legitimation was practiced, and practicable, from the level of the individual member of the audience who "participated" in this media event, to the art museum which hosted it, to the national states involved.

The history of Israeli efforts to mount a similarly successful exhibition to tour the United States is more complex, if only because their relations with the Palestinians and Jordanians have been even more tortured than with the Egyptians. In 1980, a year after the closing of the Tut blockbuster tour, Israeli museum officials began negotiations with the Met in New York and the Smithsonian in Washington for a show of ancient archeological material from the Holy Land. When it became clear that some objects to be included came from East Jerusalem, taken by the Israelis in the 1967 war and still disputed by Jordan, the Met decided to cancel the exhibit because it would "represent a de facto acceptance of Israel's claim to the area" (*The New York Times*, March 12, 1982, B3). This in turn

brought stinging rebukes from New York City Mayor Ed Koch and various Jewish leaders. The Smithsonian also wanted to exclude the artifacts from East Jerusalem, whereupon the Israelis cancelled the show altogether.

Three years later, however, it was announced that the show had been rescheduled for the Met, to open in 1986 (*The New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1986, p. 9). The U.S. State Department has provided the necessary indemnification and insurance, indicating that even as it still includes objects from disputed territory, the show is in the American political interest. The preceding year of increasing terrorist attacks by Palestinian factions surely contributed to the willingness of the American government to side with Israeli claims to previously Jordanian territory. But lest an unsophisticated audience be attracted to the show by media hype or just because of its heavy political purpose, Met officials made it clear that "it won't be everyone's cup of tea"..."It's the kind of show where the viewer will have to do some work, not like, say a Rubens show where the color helps to seduce you" (*The New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1986, p.9). This show will be "framed" as "archeology-for-archeology's sake," seemingly innocent of the politics ce its inception.

Lest the Arabs appear to have lost this propaganda battle, it should be noted that during this same period of time the Smithsonian sponsored an exhibit of 281 objects from Ancient Syria on a nationwide tour. But because it was not to be shown in New York, it would receive far less (if any) *New York Times* coverage. Ostensibly also "archeology-for-archeology's sake," its coverage in *Smithsonian Magazine* is not designed to turn crowds away. Rather, the project director was quoted: "You don't need to be an expert to appreciate the objects in the show...They are so expressive that if you go to see them without any knowledge of their background, they make you *want* to find out more" (Jan. 1986, p. 165).

Blockbusters and Détente

State Department recognition of the political importance of cultural exchanges in museum exhibitions was evident before an official Arts Advisor was appointed in 1974, of course. In 1971, acting as front man negotiating Richard Nixon's visit to Peking and the formal state recognition that was to follow, Henry Kissinger proposed that the Chinese send some of their ancient art on international tour. Accordingly, in 1973-4 an exhibit of 400 works, all excavated by Chinese archeologists since Mao came to power (and therefore ostensibly "products" of the Revolution) traveled to Paris, London, Toronto, Washington, and Kansas City. It was given increasing fanfare by *The Times* at every stop, but seldom discussed was its overtly propagandistic layout, strictly according to Marxian categories of historical development (*The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1974, II:1).

This reticence was due, in part, to the general etiquette of détente, which now extended to the Soviet Union. In 1973, Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev signed cultural accords which were affirmed at their 1974 summit meeting. There followed a number of overtly-billed "Détente Shows" (Balfe, 1986). These started with Impressionist and Old Masters paintings

from the Hermitage, proclaimed the message that the Soviet state, which owned the works, was civilized and appreciative of Western culture. A 1975 exhibit of Scythian gold objects demonstrated that even the ancestors of present-day Soviet peoples were remarkably artistic and "civilized," as well.

Meanwhile, in China, the downfall of the Gang of Four in 1976 and the gradual lifting of cultural bans which followed led to a cautious increase in arts exchanges with the United States, a more de-politicized atmosphere surrounding them, and a lower profile for them altogether. Thus a second U.S. tour of ancient Chinese art in 1980 was given little "blockbuster" hype, with Hilton Kramer of *The Times* warning novices that the exhibition "was not altogether easy for a public uninstructed in the rudiments of Chinese archeology" (April 11, 1980, C1). This deliberately lower profile — even as the works included were magnificently subtle — was, in part, a response to some obvious mistakes that were made by the Soviets in loan shows to the United States in 1976 and 1977.

At this point, détente between the two super powers had become frayed, and in such a context, propagandizing became all the more tempting and all the more obvious, in turn. Thus both powers sent to the other shows obviously proclaiming the "official party line." American paintings from the Met, sent to Moscow, deliberately included works of Pop art and more avant garde abstractions, as evidence of artistic freedom in the United States. While these works met with near-total imcomprehension in the Soviet Union, the overtly-billed "Détente Show" of Soviet Socialist Realist works sent to the Met was widely panned as "dismal" (Kramer, 1977); the attendance was low indeed. Even unknowledgeable American audiences could see no artistic merit in these works, whose political message was so obvious that no disinterested aesthetic response was possible at all (Balfe, 1985).

But the respective American and Soviet officials of culture seemed to recognize their mistakes, and the exhibits exchanged during the next two years included only works of superior quality, without specific propagandistic messages. Seen in the United States were shows of Russian Formalism and Constructivism (which had been anathematized by Stalin, but whose political history was ignored in the exhibitions). And at the Met in 1979, "Treasures of the Kremlin," was heralded as the "crown jewels," demonstrating "Moscow's early sense of a demanding spiritual destiny" (*The New York Times*, May 13, 1979, II:1). But in 1980, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the cultural accords were abruptly cancelled (along with the intended exhibit of works from the Hermitage upon which an American corporate sponsor had already spent $1 million), and no further exchanges were made.

However, following the re-establishment of accords at the Geneva summit meeting in December 1985, a new exchange of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces has been announced between American and Soviet museums. As in the previous exchanges, these were facilitated by Armand Hammer, a hardly disinterested observer. The 1975 shows in New York had been held at Knoedler's Gallery (which he owns), not at the Met; the Impressionist works to be sent first to the Soviet Union

in the 1986 exchange are in fact from Hammer's own collection; another of his properties, Occidental Petroleum, has been and is again the corporate sponsor of these exhibits. But any obvious self-interest is disclaimed on all sides: "This is a first step in people-to-people exchanges, which, hopefully, will be followed by cooperation in other areas, such as arms reduction and the avoidance of a nuclear war" (*The New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1985, 15).

While the Soviet-owned works in this new exchange are of superlative quality (enough to appear on the front page of *The Times*), it is significant that rather than again appearing in New York at Knoedler's or the Met, the show is announced for the National Gallery in Washington. While New York is understood to be the artistic and financial capital of the nation (if not the world), Washington is the political capital. Leaving aside the rivalry between the Met and the National Gallery as the foremost American museum, it is obvious to all concerned that a New York opening for an exchanged show carries more of an aura of "art-for-art's-sake," however politically motivated it may be, while a Washington opening has more obvious political significance. All the more likely is the wider public to get caught up in the politicized frame put on such art, but all the more necessary is it that the art be splendid enough to overwhelm the frame. Certainly there is here an example of the contradiction between the supposed universal-yet-individualizing values of the art, and the instrumental values of its use as propaganda. Yet these contradictory purposes are also in accord, each giving greater significance to the other. Who would have thought that Matisse's "Red Room," in a unique visit from Moscow to Washington, might be considered capable of preventing nuclear war? Can art truly be as ultimately meaningful and powerful as artists have long claimed, so that even politicians must recognize the fact?

Bigger and Better Blockbusters

As these examples have attested, political usage of artworks in international exchanges between museums have become increasingly sophisticated since the mixed-success of the 1953 Japanese show. Two most recent examples provide evidence of much more careful planning of works for particular audiences, of much enhanced scale, and of much more subtle political and economic messages. Let us look, finally, at "Treasure Houses of Britain," and "The Festival of India."

Notably, both these shows involve states which have been long-term allies of the United States, although the need for improved mutual understanding between these particular allies remains. Both also were paired with reciprocal "American Festivals" in Britain and India, although these have each received only "mixed reviews" (*The New York Times*, June 15, 1985, 57; *The Washington Post*, June 12, 1985, B1). In contrast, response to both shows in America has been altogether enthusiastic, and both the economic and political effects are expected to be beneficial and substantial (*The New York Times*, June 13, 1985, C19).

One obvious intended result of the "Treasure House" show is expanded tourism, building on an already enhanced Anglophilia to include specific visits to English country houses. For the American masses who might

never travel to England, the magnificence and splendor of the British collections were given wide publicity through the presence, at the opening of the show, of the Prince and Princess of Wales. They gave reflected glamour and legitimation to the collectors of these objects, legitimating as well the status assertion of all patrons of the exhibit, whether the owners of the works or the audience for them. Additionally, the subtitle of the show implies its political message: "Five Centuries of Private Patronage." Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan could hardly have found a more effective way for both conservative governments to "lobby" against governmental patronage of the arts than to emphasize the superlative quality of artwork collected without governmental assistance! Again, it is significant that this exhibition, with its remarkably elaborate installation, is to be seen only in Washington. It, too, has needed Ticketron to handle reservations, but given the 6 years of planning involved and the overwhelming quality and quantity of the objects, there was a sophistication in media coverage and interpretation of the show which reflected the greater sophistication of its audience. It is not just traditional fondness for the British, or exposure to Masterpiece Theater, which contributed to the totally positive and massive audience response. Rather, after years of exposure to successive blockbusters and blockbuster "hype," the audience takes for granted that political and commercial alliances are being forged through such cultural exchanges. Whether they therefore see the art only as political, or on the contrary, now can see through and thus disregard the underlying propaganda, may be an unanswerable question. I suspect that most in the audience are comfortable with such re-contextualized art exhibitions, if only because they can feel more at ease with their own status-seeking when they attend.

The mixture of motives, like the affinities of art and politics in the first place, are even more evident in the "Festival of India." Originally modeled after its predecessor in Great Britain (the outcome of negotiations between Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi to re-establish the Anglo-Indian alliance), the American "Festival of India" was one outcome of a 1982 meeting between Indira Gandhi and Ronald Reagan. By the time it opened simultaneously in Washington and New York in the summer of 1985, Indira had been assassinated and world attention had otherwise been focused on the violence of recent Indian history and the present, through the popular film "Gandhi" and in press coverage of the Sikh rebellions and the Bhopal disaster. While all of this bad news helped to raise American consciousness toward India, it would appear to have increased American sympathy as well. As the opening of the Festival became imminent, "grass roots" groups from all over the country wanted to participate. This local demand for involvement had no precedent in any previous international-exchange blockbusters, whose American itineraries had been coordinated well in advance to certain key museums. Now, due to the greater sophistication of local arts organizations (nourished by NEA matching grants and state arts councils), hundreds of groups in over 80 cities competed for attention of Festival sponsors (Breckenridge, 1986).

Certainly the original planning and the official opening of the Festival were superbly orchestrated. Not only did Rajiv Gandhi attend both

Washington and New York openings (whose galas were covered in great detail), but the event received cover stories almost simultaneously in *The New York Sunday Times Magazine* (June, 1985), *National Geographic* (April, 1985), and *Smithsonian Magazine* (June, 1985), to say nothing of coverage in national news weeklies. And because both in major cities and throughout the country, the Festival involved musicians, dancers, jugglers, kite makers, and performers from all levels of Indian culture, press coverage and audience awareness and participation was ongoing, highly localized, and diverse.

Obviously, this Festival involved an aggregate of popular, folk, and elite culture under the same sponsorship, and addressed both mass and elite audiences in different programs. Despite the "art-for-art's-sake" purity of press reviews and the installations of some of the component exhibitions in major American museums, political controversies over the totality were not masked. In this country, they were, in part, the result of competition between local sponsoring groups for control or for access to centralized grants from the NEH. In India itself, some key works were denied "exit permits" by the Indian Supreme Court beause of their religious significance, and the director of the Delhi Museum claimed that such cultural exchanges were, in fact, "exploitation of many museums and institutions of many countries, reducing them almost to the status of cultural colonies of affluent countries" (*The Washington Post*, June 12, 1985, B2).

Certainly, in the interests of international politics between states and their aggregated peoples, some particular interests are served at the expense of others. Yet there are expectations that benefits will occur, both economically and in terms of domestic politics, for the participants. Folk arts (including textiles) that have been scorned in India have received new prominence by their display in America, and the artists and craftsmen in turn have been given new governmental support (*The New York Times*, Oct 12, 1985, 17; Jan. 10, 1986, C11). More important are American initiatives to mediate Indian-Pakistani tensions, and the renegotiations of American aid to both countries. If the Festival has helped grass-roots Americans appreciate the richness of Indian cultures, presumably there will be less domestic grumbling about foreign aid to the sub-continent. In the words of the director of the agency coordinating much of the Festival, "we hope to develop some sort of rapport, so that no matter what the governments are saying to each other, there is at least a chance of dialogue going on at different levels" (*The New York Times*, June 13, 1985, C19).

That statement can be taken as paradigmatic of museum blockbusters generally, as well as of cultural exchanges of all kinds. When sent on international tours for purposes of universal aesthetic enrichment, the artworks of even friendly states also carry political and economic "halos" to audiences that have long since come to expect such frames and so respond accordingly.

Summary and Conclusion

Certainly, in the contemporary international scene which places few

economic and political limits on tourism by elites and which includes an educationally broadened awareness of cultural similarities of peoples, it would not seem necessary to subject fragile and irreplaceable artworks to the risk of permanent damage and even destruction by shipping them around the world. Instead, those who dominate political and economic institutions could simply visit the works where they are; others could do so vicariously through film and television coverage. Nonetheless, as these examples have attested, artworks increasingly are sent traveling to help "normalize" political relations, as bona fides of trust precisely because of their fragility and pricelessness—as in an exchange of hostages or, in tribal societies, of women. Accordingly, the artworks are intended to "win the hearts and minds of the people," especially those who are not in the international tourist set and who may never even attend their domestic exhibition but know of it only through media coverage. In such supposedly improved and less suspicious environments, more formal diplomatic, political, economic, and military alliances can be negotiated with less resistance from local, antagonistic constituencies.

Ownership and, by implication, sensitive appreciation of great artworks have long been taken as symbolic of superior ethical and moral qualities, or "higher" culture generally. To be sure, such claims may be more persuasive when made by living artists or performers, who also travel widely and who personify the vitality of the cultures which they perpetuate. But they demonstrate individual uniqueness as well, and it is safer for a state or society to lay claim to universally great works created or collected by ancestors long before any contemporary political issue came into being.

In the examples discussed here, exhibitions of works owned or created by the sponsor's society have traveled to various American museums, often through mediation of the U.S. State Department. The exhibitions have varied in the aesthetic qualities of the artworks themselves, the publicity or other interpretation put upon them, the size and social location of the audience to be attracted and persuaded and, foremost and determining of these other variables, the nature of the political agenda of both sponsor and host. Depending upon this later variable, the former ones link together in exhibitions to be disinterestedly understood as art, or self-interestedly arranged for the propagandistic purposes of the museums themselves or of the competing states.

Either way, the artworks selected must be of superior aesthetic quality if they are to be accepted by the elites who interpret the works for the wider, less sophisticated audience. Reviewers have varied in their willingness to take sides in the diplomatic agendas, by either ignoring or loudly proclaiming the non-aesthetic purposes of sponsors of museum blockbusters. Yet the more important the political agendas and propaganda become, the more overwhelming and aesthetically powerful must be the works which carry them symbolically, and the more readily are art critics "co-opted" into discussing only the art. Of course, in addition to artistic interpretations of politically-freighted blockbuster exhibitions, press coverage is usually given to their economic impacts. Since this is usually assessed in terms of profits to the host city and institution, the exhibition sponsor is interpreted as benefiting the audiences not just spiritually, by

allowing them access to this great art, but economically as well. The sponsor is thus presented as a participant in a free market of the world economic order and in the free market of culture and artistic creativity, as conservator of the world's patrimony on all counts.

While many have decried the increasing political manipulation of artworks by states for propagandistic purposes, their commercial manipulation is less commonly criticized, at least by those who favor the ostensibly free market of capitalism. From the left, a critique such as Walter Benjamin's (1960) makes sense: The unique qualities of individual artworks, experienced "face-to-face," are indeed cheapened as they are made commonly available through the kind of mechanical reproduction that accompanies blockbuster exhibitions. But Edward Banfield's (1984) argument that any form of government subsidy is inherently corruptive of aesthetic experience would seem no more persuasive than Benjamin's case against commercialization. Neither position recognizes that artworks are inevitably preserved and displayed for less-than-purely aesthetic reasons. Indeed, it is the elective affinity between great artworks and those who possess great political, economic, or religious power that makes them so symbolically meaningful to the multitudes who must encounter them if any claim to "universal" significance is to be plausible. If great art is to sacralize secular pursuits, the halo effect either works reflectively in the other direction as well, or it does not work at all.

In any event, the alternative of "art-for-art's sake"—as so often proclaimed by the artworlds and particularly the museums involved in international exchanges such as described here—is recognized by all concerned to have both political and economic consequences. Indeed, such recognition contributes much to its appeal as a rationale for state support for the arts, in any fashion.

Thus those with political or economic agendas, as well as those whose purposes are primarily aesthetic, are increasingly caught in a dilemma of their own cooperative making. In many ways, all have mutually benefited from their symbiotic relationships and the increased rationalization of the processes by which these are effected. Institutional and legal mechanisms are in place to facilitate the use of artworks as cultural ambassadors, whenever international politics, economics, or even religion finds it advantageous. But once the "friendly" competition of symbol systems is enjoined internationally through the use of the arts, one cannot opt out of the game. Even allied states must maintain visibility in each others' museums and galleries, concert halls, and theaters, to increasingly sophisticated audiences who now expect varieties of propagandistic "halos" around visiting artworks, and take that expectation into account. All the more must the installation and interpretation of major loan exhibitions be carefully orchestrated by sponsors and hosts, and all the more is such show-biz seen for what it is.

Over all, however, it is clear that of all the variables considered in this comparison of museum blockbusters, the irreducible factor is the aesthetic power of the artworks so obligingly coopted for other purposes. Such propagandistic uses are effective only if the art remains, in some measure through its own qualities, transcendent. As such, in a general sense, the

universal and individualizing values expressed in great art stand as judge and measure of those who would use it for their own purposes. The same elusive qualities which make the arts so difficult to analyze sociologically or to use for propaganda purposes may ultimately contribute most to their survival.

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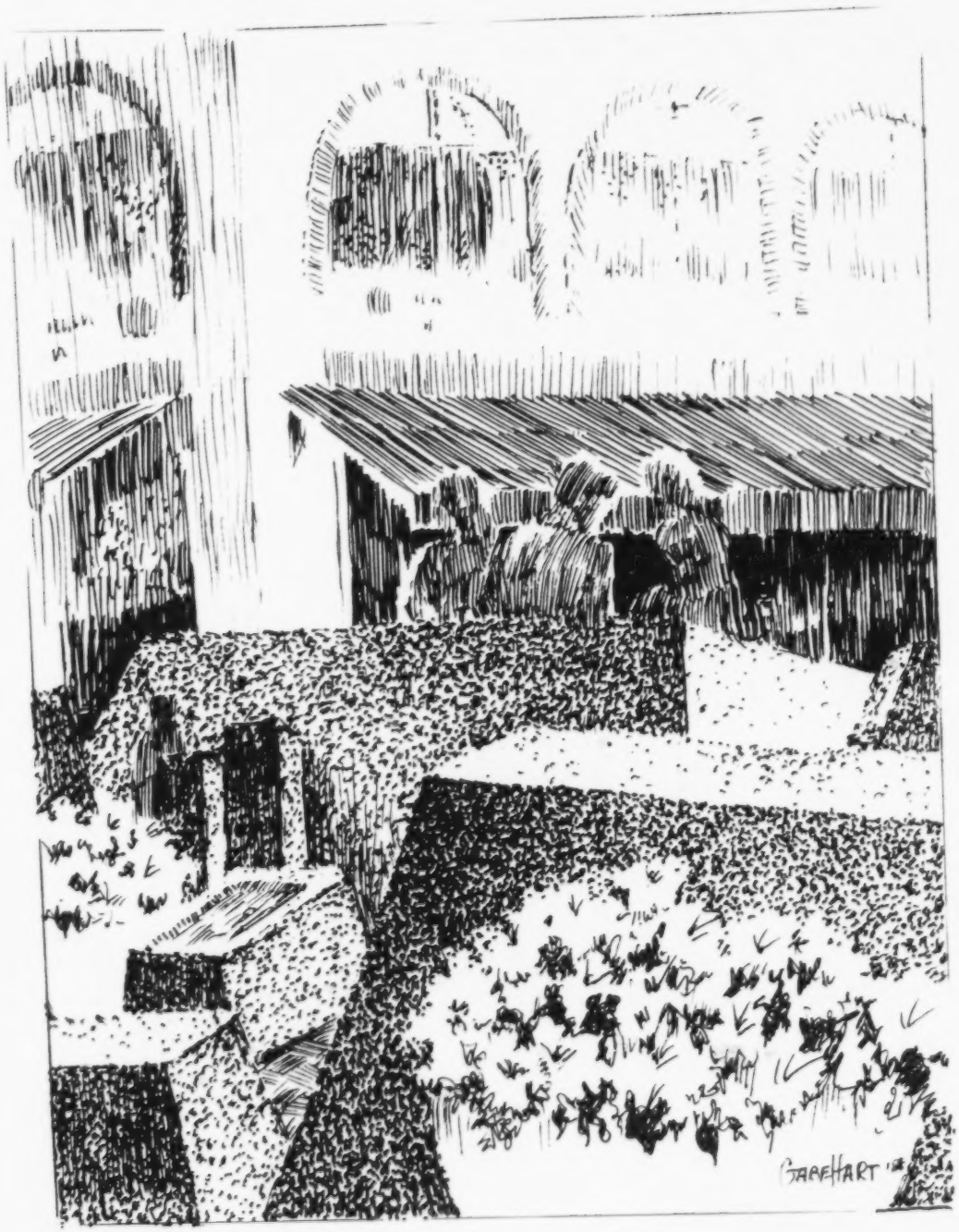

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Art and the Public Interest

Edward C. Banfield

Author's note: This lecture is a restatement of parts of my book, *The Democratic Muse*, Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1984. Here and there I may have taken a few lines from the book.

Toward the end of Balzac's great novel, *Cousin Bette*, a kindly and thoughtful courtesan raises the question that I wish to discuss. Josepha, the former mistress of Baron Hutlot, has taken pity on his distraught and impoverished wife. If you only had the skills of a courtesan, she tells the baroness, you would be able to keep your husband from running after the likes of me. A practical woman, she sees the problem here: How is a virtuous woman to learn the tricks of a courtesan? But she also sees the solution to the problem: "The government," she says, "ought to start a school for respectable women."

Well, why not?

If one supposes that a government ought to do whatever will give its people — a majority of them, or perhaps any minority that can get legislation passed — pleasure, or whatever it is that they want. If one supposes this, what objection can be made to Josepha's proposal? Is there any limit to the sphere of a democratic government? Are there principles which enable one to say government may properly do this but not that? If so, what are they? This, in its most general form, is the question I mainly wish to discuss.

Let us narrow the question. First by limiting ourselves to the American government. If there are principles of the sort that I am looking for, they may be different from place to place and time to time. Josepha was a child of the French Revolution. We are the great-great-grandchildren of the American Revolution. So the question is: In the light of American tradition and American present-day reality, are there limits to the scope of government? If there are, what are they?

Although we are looking for general answers to these questions, it will be convenient to discuss them in the context of a particular subject matter: art, especially visual art. What is the justification, if any, for public, i.e., taxpayer, support of art and artists?

As you doubtless know, since 1965 the National Endowment for the Arts has given grants, some large and some small, to individuals and to organizations who, or which, in the judgment of panels of artists and other "qualified" persons, will thereby be enabled to make a larger contribution to cultural life. By comparison with most Federal subsidy programs — say those for farm products — those for the arts are picayune: a very tiny drop in the federal budget deficit. By far the largest part of what the public gives for the support of art is in the form of indirect, rather than direct, subsidies; various tax exemptions are far more important to the budgets of art institutions than are direct grants from the National Endowment or other governmental sources. But even taking indirect subsidies into account, the sums of public money involved are

small by comparison with almost anything else that the Federal government does.

My reason for singling out for discussion the public subsidy of art (rather than, say, the growing of tobacco) is that art presents — or rather *seems* to present — a hard case. To anyone but a thorough-going Philistine it may seem obvious that the support of art is a proper, even a highly desirable, activity of government. It is easy to make a case against public subsidy of tobacco-growing. But what can be said against the subsidy of art?

* * *

Let us look at the American political tradition as it bears upon these matters, especially the principles of the Founders — principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

I use the phrase "natural law liberalism" to characterize the *political* theory of the Founders. The element of *liberalism* in the American tradition is epitomized by the ringing words of the Declaration of Independence: All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To secure these rights governments are instituted. For the philosopher John Locke, whose writings these words echo, the only justification for the infringement of liberty is its preservation. As you know, Jefferson, the author of the Declaration, was an extremist in defense of liberty.

But the Founders were the heirs of Aristotle as well as of Locke, and the idea of individual liberty was wholly alien to the thought of the ancients. "What the statesman is . . . anxious to produce," Aristotle wrote, "is a certain moral character in his fellow citizens, namely a disposition to virtue and to the performance of virtuous actions." Most of the state constitutions written before the Federal one, contained provisions to encourage "civic virtue," without which, the constitution-makers thought, individual liberty would be no blessing at all. In the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia, however, there was no discussion of civic virtue. Even those like James Madison who wished to supplant the states with a national government did not contemplate a morally improving function for the new government. The Preamble of the Constitution declares its purpose: to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, protect for the common defense, secure the blessings of liberty.

There had been, you will remember, a stiff contest between those who wanted to preserve the sovereignty of the states and those who wanted to subordinate the states to the national government. In the end, there was a compromise. Article I, Section VIII of the Constitution enumerates the powers given to the national government, all others being (by the 10th Amendment) reserved to the states and to the people thereof.

If you look down that list of the 18 enumerated powers— to lay and collect taxes, to borrow money, to establish a uniform rule of naturalization, and so on— you will not find one that could conceivably authorize a program for the support of art, culture, or even moral improvement. (There is a power "to promote progress of science and useful arts:" This

is the patent clause, an altogether different matter.) As the authors of the *Federalist* declared, the powers of the national government were "few and defined." How few and how sharply defined Washington discovered when he recommended to Congress the establishment of a national university. Madison, as President, made that same recommendation, accompanying it with an acknowledgement that a constitutional amendment would be necessary to make it possible.

The powers of the Federal government are no longer "few and defined," they are many and undefined. The change has come about in recent decades through interpretation by the Supreme Court of the "general welfare" and the "necessary and proper" clauses of the Constitution. In my opinion the Court's rulings violate the intention of the Framers and of the voters who ratified the Constitution. (Need I say that mine is a minority opinion?)

One may argue that, whatever the intentions of the Framers and Ratifiers, the course of events in the past 200 years has made it necessary to enlarge the Federal sphere. Perhaps this is so. But the enlargement of that sphere has not been the consequence of any general public discussion and has not been guided by any general principles. So I think it is fair to say that the American *tradition*, although not the American *practice*, still gives the federal government only such powers as were delegated to it.

* * *

If Americans have never entirely agreed, or been entirely clear, about the scope of the two great and more or less conflicting purposes of government — the protection of the individual in the exercise of his rights and his improvement as a citizen —, they *have* agreed that government ought always to serve *public*, as opposed to private, interests. The Vermont constitution of 1793 contained a provision typical of those in many other state constitutions: "That government is or ought to be instituted for the common benefit, and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or set of men, who are only part of that community...."

What Americans have agreed to is the *principle* that government, state or national, should do only such things as will serve *public* interests. Obviously the application of this principle presents difficulties in a large and heterogenous society — difficulties that would not exist in a small and homogenous one. What exactly can it mean to speak to an interest common to the community, when the community is not a village, or even a society like that of the Founders (consisting of about 3 million persons, slaves not counted) but rather a society as large and complex as our own? Is there any interest that *all* Americans share? Clearly it is not always possible to say what is in the common interest and what is not. Nevertheless I cannot agree with those who say that the idea is entirely without content.

In thinking about what is meant by "the common benefit" it seems to me essential to distinguish between two quite different conceptions. One I'll call the *welfare* conception. This derives from Utilitarianism, the slogan

of which was (and is) "the greatest good of the greatest number"—"good" here meaning whatever the individual chooses provided it does not harm others. According to this conception one is "better off" when he gets what he wants, whatever that may be. The term "*general welfare*" refers to the welfare of individuals viewed in the aggregate: it is the level of satisfaction of the members of the society considered as private persons, each with his or her set of wants, desires, tastes, whims, or whatever.

The other, contrasting conception is of "*the public interest.*" This refers to those wants that people have when *in the role of citizen*, that is, as members of a public. The very idea of a "society" implies that those who constitute it share some guiding conceptions of right and of justice, of how matters that affect them collectively are to be decided, of the necessity of coping collectively with problems, some actual and pressing and others yet unknown but sure to arise eventually, and therefore of the necessity of preserving and if possible improving their capacity to respond effectively to unspecifiable needs over what seems to be an endless future — endless because the collectivity is mortal in the sense that the individuals who compose it are.

I believe that the principal concern of government ought to be with the public interest, not the general welfare. I do not say that assisting individuals — "consumers" — to get more of what they want is *never* a proper function of government. But I *do* say that the *principal*, the *overriding*, task of government, is with matters that concern "citizens." In other words, "welfare," what individuals in their private capacities think good for themselves, ought to be subordinate to the "public interest," what individuals in their capacity as members of a public think good for the public.

By way of illustration, I suggest that a courthouse is justified in a way that a statue in front of it is not. The courthouse exists for the performance of a function — the administration of justice — that is indispensable to the well-being and good order of a public, a function that can *only* be served by government. The statue is there to give pleasure to the eye of the passer-by.

* * *

So much for political theory. I turn now to its bearing on governmental support of art. The National Endowment and other public agencies give to all of the arts — music, the dance, theatre, literature as well as visual art. I limit myself now to visual art. What I have to say about public support of it has some application to the other arts. But the question of how much application I will have to set aside.

The key question for me is this: Is the promotion of visual art in the public interest? Is it like the courthouse, or like the statue in front of the courthouse? If one examines the arguments that were made for the establishment of the National Endowment one finds that its proponents (there were hardly any opponents) couched their arguments in public interest terms. The "culture industry" of New York City was the most powerful single proponent. Supporters of the bill mentioned, but did not rest their case on, the benefits that would accrue to hotels, restaurants and shops

from the tourist trade that subsidies to New York's cultural institutions would attract. What they emphasized was that government support would give "official recognition" to art and culture and, by so doing, "improve the image" of the United States and "raise its prestige." No politician was fooled by this rhetoric, of course. There was a general sense that it was unseemly to point to naked commercial interests. They had to be clothed in the rhetoric of the public interest.

Curiously this rhetoric did not claim benefits to the public from art as aesthetic experience; the claims were mostly on grounds that had only an incidental relation to art. Subsidy of art would not only "improve the image" of the United States; it would also improve international understanding, benefit the poor, and relieve tensions in the urban ghettoes. These alleged benefits were of course all ones that could be achieved — if they could be achieved at all — as well or better by means entirely different than the support of art.

A century or more ago, more plausible connections between art — I speak now of visual art only — and the public interest were asserted, although in support of demands on government. After the Civil War, when the great museums were founded, art was seen by the Protestant elite that ran things as a means of moralizing the growing populations of the large cities — of inculcating the domestic and civic virtues which (so the elite supposed) the largely immigrant underlying population lacked. Frederick Law Olmstead, for example, who was one of the creators of Central Park in New York and also a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wrote that "public parks, gardens, galleries of art and instruction in art, music, athletic sports, and healthful recreations" were all "means of cultivating taste." To the reformers of the time it appeared that the underlying population lacked "habits of discipline." Cultural institutions, the historian David D. Hall has written, were seen as a way of imposing an "ethic of deference to 'the best'."

This view of the social function of art rested upon a particular conception of the nature of art. In the middle of the 19th century the great opinion-maker in the art world was John Ruskin, for whom beauty, truth and goodness were all one. Art being something that would elevate and refine the popular mind, it was certainly plausible for the reformers to build museums. This was done on a large scale, but mainly through private philanthropy; local governments gave land, but in the last century — indeed until after the Second World War — hardly anyone thought it constitutional for the Federal government to support the arts directly.

The great museums had hardly been built when Ruskin's doctrines were declared obsolete and the art world defined art in altogether different terms. Walter Pater and others declared that art existed for its *own* sake — that it had nothing to do with truth and morality. There have since been successive reformulations by artists, critics, and philosophers on the nature of art, each one bringing it into a more abstract and esoteric realm, a realm farther from popular interest and understanding. Today it is hard to find an artist of any standing who thinks that his or her work has, or ought to have, a morally or otherwise improving effect upon the viewer. There is much disagreement as to what is properly to be called

"art," but I think it is safe to say — with respect to *visual* art — that art is now widely understood to pertain to a world that is radically separated from that of ordinary experience. Much contemporary art is intended to jolt the viewer out of his normal perception of the world — to shock or surprise him into seeing the world as absurd, irrational, or as something that does not matter. Consider, for example, the message of Ad Reinhardt's work, *Abstract Painting*. He has described it as follows:

A square (neutral, shapeless) canvas, five feet wide, five feet high, as high as a man, as wide as a man's outstretched arms (not large, not small, sizeless), trisected (no composition) one horizontal form negating one vertical form (formless, no top, no bottom, directionless), three (more or less dark (lightless), non-contrasting (colorless) colors, brushwork brushed out to remove brushwork, a mat, flat, free-hand painted surface (glossless, texture-less, non-linear, no hard edge, no soft edge) which does not reflect its surroundings- a pure, abstract, non-objective,, timeless, spaceless, changeless, relationless, disinterested painting, an object that is self-conscious (no unconsciousness), ideal, transcendent aware of nothing but art (absolutely no anti-art).

If one thinks, as I do, that the proper function of government is to attend to *public* matters — that is, to what concerns the *citizen* as opposed to the consumer — one cannot justify governmental support of visual art, not at least as art is understood by the art world today. If one thinks that art is a public matter one ought, to be consistent, to favor government censorship, or suppression, of such art as is deemed injurious to the public.

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If, in the tradition of Aristotle, one identifies "the good" with what is most distinctively human — with reason above all, but also the love of the beautiful — one must conclude that what exalts the distinctively human is admirable and what debases it is the reverse. Art which debases man, which tells him that human life is absurd, or disgusting, must, if words are used properly, be called obscene. The protection of the public against obscenity is, and always has been, a proper function of government. It is part of what we call environmental protection.

I do not want to be understood as saying that contemporary art is obscene and should be suppressed. Most of it claims to be — and I suppose is — quite irrelevant to any public concern. As for that which *is* obscene, I doubt that as a practical matter it has enough effect on the quality of the society to justify incurring the dangers inherent in censorship. But we should recognize that the claim for governmental intervention must cut both ways: if government should support some art on public interest, grounds then — in principle — it should suppress some on the same grounds.

* * *

Whether or not art is improving from a *public* standpoint, there is no doubt at all that it is a source of private satisfaction to a great many people. (I say "satisfaction" rather than "pleasure" because the aesthetic experience is not necessarily pleasurable: Sometimes it is unsettling, even

painful). If you go to an exhibition of, say, French Impressionists you are likely to find crowds so thick that is is difficult to see the paintings. That surely is evidence that large numbers of people "enjoy," or get satisfaction from, viewing that kind of art. Thus art can contribute to the "*welfare*" of individuals even when it does not serve the public interest.

Subsidies can, and doubtless do, increase the amount of art consumed. They make it possible, for example, for museums to exhibit more works and to exhibit them more often. They make art works more accessible to people who live at a distance from great museums. They help to introduce school children to aesthetic experience, a dimension of life many might otherwise miss.

Tibor Scitovsky, an eminent economist, has written persuasively in *The Joyless Economy* of the high rate of return that is to be had from improving one's tastes. A predictable happy ending or a too-simple piece of music, he says, yields less satisfaction than one would get if one learned to enjoy something more complex. An investment of time and money to improve one's tastes, Scitovsky says, will pay off handsomely. The justification for public support of the arts — he believes that it is the *only* justification — arises from this opportunity to increase welfare by improving tastes. I have two objections to this argument for public support. The first you have already heard: Giving people pleasure is not the proper business of government.

My other objection to the claim that government ought to invest in the improvement of tastes is that individuals have ample incentive to make such investments on their own. I grant that it is often very difficult to know how to invest wisely in the improvement of one's tastes — how much time and effort (not to mention money) will be required to acquire a new taste? And how much satisfaction will the newly acquired taste yield? These considerations discourage investment, I have no doubt. But it is a fact of everyday experience that most people are constantly endeavoring to acquire new tastes, tastes they expect will yield them more and better satisfactions than the old ones. Think of all the people who are employed to teach others to ski, to play the violin, to do gourmet cooking, to distinguish vintage wine from *vin ordinaire*, and so on.

Some may ask: Why shouldn't government do what it can to help consumers get whatever satisfactions they want (subject only to the provision that these satisfactions be not injurious to others)? That the founders limited the scope of government to *public* purposes is a fact of history, but the world today is very different from the world of 200 years ago. The democratic principle — some may say — requires that government, the servant of the people, do whatever the people want.

I doubt if anyone will want to carry this argument all the way. No one thinks that 51 percent of the people are entitled to do as they please with the other 49 percent. Indeed, no one thinks that a majority *however large* is entitled to infringe the rights of a minority *however small*. There is no escaping the need to limit the sphere of government. And there is no escaping the conclusion that, whatever government does, it ought to serve a *public* purpose. This is so because everything that government does involves the exercise of coercion, or the threat of it, and no *private*

purpose can justify coercion.

These are the decisive considerations. There are others — of a prudential nature — that support the conclusion that public support of art is undesirable. Let me list some. (No importance is to be attached to the order of the listing.)

1. Government support of art involves a transfer of income in the wrong direction: that is, from the less well-off to the more well-off. Museum-goers and concert-goers are mostly relatively prosperous as compared to the average taxpayer. Why should the "poor" subsidize the "not poor"?

2. Economists can demonstrate rigorously that a competitive market will allocate goods and services efficiently — that is, in a way that cannot be improved upon if consumer's tastes are the standard. Admittedly many markets are not truly competitive and some goods are by their nature such that they cannot be allocated by a market. These limitations have little application to the art world, however. A museum is no less able than a movie house to charge an entrance fee. Nowadays most museums *do* charge, but they charge less than the full cost of what they provide — and less, incidentally, than any movie house. If, like the movie, the museum charged what would yield it the greatest "profit" (that is, difference between income and costs), one could be sure that it was not wasting resources. Insofar as subsidies take the place of a price set by the market, one cannot know whether resources are being wasted or not. Imagine a heavily endowed museum the displays of which no one wants to see. Such a museum might exist indefinitely, occupying a choice site and filling its storerooms with costly objects; even though it served no one, there would be no way of bringing it to an end. Imagine by contrast, a museum that, like the movie house, depends entirely on its earnings. It would have a strong incentive to find ways to please its customers, and one could be reasonably sure that a customer who paid its entrance fee expected to get at least as much satisfaction from its displays as he would from any other use of his money.

3. One may oppose governmental intervention — even in some matters that serve the public interest — on the grounds that there is a limit to what government can do effectively and that this limit has been reached or perhaps over-reached. The argument is that we ought to forgo doing some things that are of lesser importance in order that we may do better those that are absolutely essential — national defense, for example. Several years ago the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, a body established by Congress to monitor the working of the federal system, urged the President to initiate a national debate on the topic "What is a 'national purpose'?" The idea was to see if national programs could be grouped according to priority — some as "paramount" (national defense and the economy), others "primary" (e.g., the postal system), "secondary" (the lesser regulatory programs), "tertiary" (state and local activities involving the federal government) and, finally, those "of no real concern." The proposal was never taken seriously, perhaps because everything that the national government does is of "paramount" importance in the eyes of its beneficiaries.

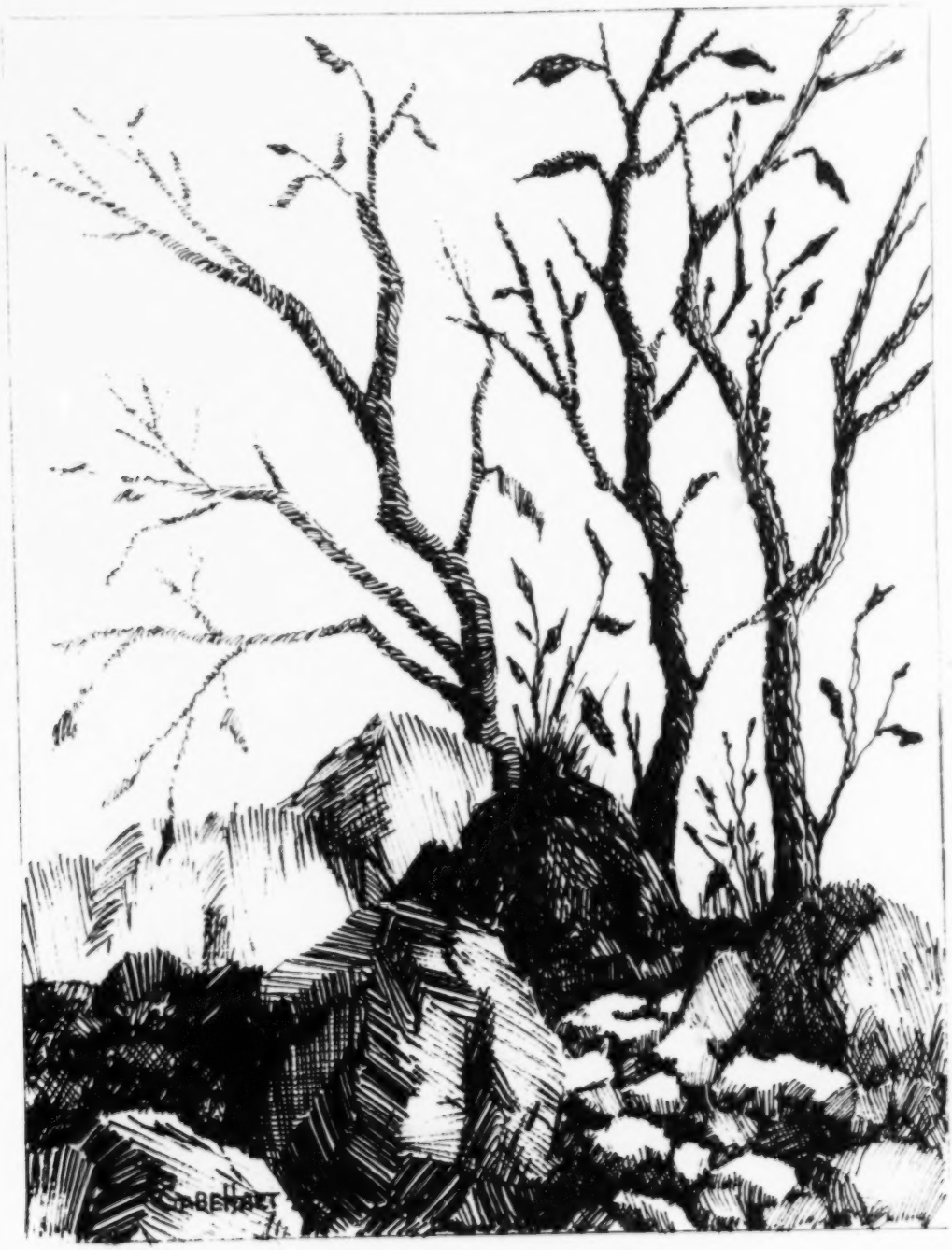
A sacrifice of effectiveness from trying to do too much is perhaps most

easily recognized as an administrative phenomenon: There is a natural limit to the number of talented executives as well as to the number and range of problems to which any one executive can give attention. But the problem has a political dimension as well. It is impossible for even the most conscientious voter to be reasonably well informed about even the most important issues of our day. The more numerous the matters that he must pass upon the less competent he must be, and — what is surely no less important — the less confidence he can have in his own and in his fellow-citizens' judgments.

4. Finally, I want to argue that governmental support of art tends to confuse people about the nature of art, and, indeed, to substitute for aesthetic values other values that are unrelated to it. This criticism applies to *direct* subsidies such as those of the National Endowment, not to indirect ones via tax exemptions. The objection to the direct subsidies is that they give rise to an art "establishment" intent upon the expansion of any publicly-supported activities to which the work "art" can with the slightest plausibility be attached. Since 1965, when direct aid began, there has been brought about into existence a coalition of interests — private associations, state art agencies (every state has one), the Congressional art caucus, and of course the National Endowment itself — that is devoted to the enlargement of the sphere of public support. From the standpoint of those who think that government ought *not* to support the arts the emergence of this coalition is obviously something to be deplored. But it ought also be deplored by those who want government to support "real" art — art which affords a genuine aesthetic experience. Like all public agencies, the tendency of the National Endowment and of the other art agencies is to magnify their callings — to respond to the demands of their various constituencies by establishing new programs and extending old ones, and also to create new constituencies to which they can point when they come to OMB and Congressional appropriations hearings. The NEA, according to Ronald Berman, a former chairman of its sister agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities, has sanctioned the idea that the primary purpose of support of art is the distribution of funds. The arts constituency, he writes, "determines what the definition of art of 'the arts' will be. And that constituency has in the most determined way exempted artistic activity from critical standards. Art is whatever is done, whether crafts, hobbies, or simply the display of intentions. It is an enobled form of middle-class entertainment."

What Berman calls the "redefinition of art" must be expected to continue and even to gain momentum as the agencies and their constituencies succeed in enlarging each other. The impulse to expand without much regard to direction arises from the very nature of organization, and since the potential supporters of "real" art are relatively few, art will be "redefined" to suit the most popular taste. Ironically, then, agencies created to raise popular taste end by succumbing to popular taste.

Edward C. Banfield is Professor Emeritus of Government at Harvard University. Among his notable publications are two controversial books, *The Unheavenly City* and *The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest.*



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Reshaping Policy for Arts Education

Ralph A. Smith

The shaping of policy for arts education should be done with the quality of individual life and the cultural health of the nation in mind and in a manner consistent with the nature of art. Since this is rarely done, the task is to reshape policy to make it congruent with these requirements.

In sketching how the reshaping of policy should proceed, I'll first indicate some mistakes which have been made in defining cultural and educational relations. Second, I'll indicate how policy thinking can stay on track by keeping a few basic questions in mind. And third, I'll make a few observations about the roles of the public and private sectors in supporting arts education. Such observations will be made from a point of view I call cultural criticism, which consists not only of efforts to bring the best that's been said and written to bear on the matters that concern us but also of the repulsing of harmful ideas, in this instance the harmful ideas of cultural and educational reformers.

Some Mistakes of Policy Thinking

The desire to be socially helpful and the failure to be reflective about the nature of art are responsible for a number of mistakes of policy thinking over the past two decades. I label these mistakes the sentimentalizing, the politicizing, the bureaucratizing, and the fashionabilizing of cultural and educational matters. The sentimentalizing of policy thinking is an expression of the philanthropic attitude in cultural and educational contexts. In placing the arts and arts education in the service of extra-aesthetic objectives, the politicizing of policy reflects a misconstrued instrumentalism. The bureaucratizing of policy matters consists of the substitution of procedure for substantive accomplishment, while the fashionabilizing of culture confers credibility on policies by associating them with the celebrities of the worlds of business, government, and entertainment.

Sentimentalizing Policy

The sentimentalizing of policy is an expression of the philanthropic attitude in cultural and educational affairs. By this I don't mean some characteristic attitude of foundations and charitable organizations, though they are not exempt from the charge of expressing the attitude in question, but rather what Jacques Barzun calls "the liberal doctrine of free and equal opportunity as applied to things of the mind,"[1] which I modify here to read as applied to thinking about cultural and educational relations. As all in a democratic, egalitarian society are increasingly encouraged to participate in the life of culture and as efforts are made to share the cultural wealth and engender creativity, good intentions and struggling incompetence, to use Barzun's terms, distort perspectives and displace genuine performance. The philanthropic disposition to help, care, and heal assumes that no one's feelings shall ever be hurt or any ego ever

buffeted. It also discourages competition lest some should fall behind. Sentiments, that is, which are appropriate to the church, settlement house, and psychiatric clinic are generalized to culture and education.

The problem with the philanthropic attitude is that goodwill, sincerity, and compassion obscure the true character and complexity of art and underestimate the need for disciplined intelligence to create and appreciate it. The result is the corruption of judgment and ultimately of the products of culture itself. Philanthropy in cultural and educational thinking is thus a prescription for cultural anemia.

Instances of the sentimentalizing of culture and arts education are everywhere apparent. We recognize it not only in romantic child-centered conceptions of arts education in which clues to curriculum design are taken less from the demands of society, subjects, and learning than from the interests of young minds, but also in the doctrine of relevance associated with the pedagogical prescriptions of alternative education popular in the sixties and seventies, in the belief of multicultural educators who expound an unqualified cultural relativism, and in populist rhetoric that constantly invokes art of, by, and for the people.

Once more, when applied to cultural matters the philanthropic disposition is harmful because it results in the restraint of judgment and the dilution of standards and fails to concentrate resources and energies; it prefers a flaccid tolerance to critical decisiveness. We may correctly say it is anti-intellectual because it fails to discharge the obligations of intellect. And need I add that is it not the value of compassion that is at issue—it is after all one of the major virtues — but its disproportionate and inappropriate expression in a domain where other considerations should weigh more heavily. Perhaps Marva Collin's school for minority children in Chicago conveys something of the balance that should be kept in mind. Caring and helping in her school means showing concern not only for the psychological security of the young but also for their intellectual development.

Politicizing Policy

Sentimentalism also pervades the politicizing of policy inasmuch as policymakers endorse what is essentially a social welfare concept of cultural policy in which cultural services are in effect assimilated to social services and expected to achieve similar results: improving the condition of clients. Keeping potentially disruptive social conflict at bay, however, may be an additional objective. Saul Bellow, for example, in comparing the situation of writers and literature today and in the thirties, said the difference "between that time and this is that in the thirties crackpots were not subsidized by their families. They had to go it alone for several years. Or at least until the New Deal. . . recognized that a great government could *buy* the solution of any problem and opened WPA projects in many parts of the country. I think it possible that Hopkins and Roosevelt, seeing how much trouble unhappy intellectuals had made in Russia, Germany, and Italy between 1905 and 1935, thought it a bargain to pay people twenty-three dollars a week for painting post-office murals and editing guidebooks. This plan succeeded admirably."[2] Indeed this consid-

eration alone might be enough to justify the budgets of all cultural agencies. It is a proven formula for purchasing social peace. But I won't dwell on covert cultural policy, only on public statements by cultural officials.

So far as the federal government is concerned, I think it is clear that its policies tend to reflect its social priorities—priorities such as health care, full employment, aid for the disadvantaged, racial integration, and literacy, among others. Cultural policies are no different; they too get embedded in larger social policies. Just how is brought out in an insightful analysis of policy thinking within the government by Ronald Berman, a former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The story Berman tells,[3] and he is talking not about the Humanities Endowment but about the National Endowment for the Arts, reveals how during the seventies the discussion of cultural services in Congress in effect got assimilated to social services, with the result that art as a distinctive individual accomplishment with a history of achievement and standards of excellence was transformed, as he put it, into the arts, by which he means the institutionalized expenditure of funds provided by the federal government. Like health and other social services, art too was to be understood as a public utility capable of serving the public good. Cultural support thus came to be looked upon as cultural aid for solving social problems and artistic activity as the provision of "arts experiences" to prisons, hospitals, urban ghettos, rural regions, community centers, and other agencies of public welfare. It was believed that providing such services could, among other things, sublimate adolescent violence, be an alternative to drug addiction, discourage crime, provide employment, animate the elderly, rehabilitate criminals, and encourage craftsmanship.

The effect of such beliefs, says Berman, is that justification for the support of art had little to do with the actual creation of works of art by mature artists and still less with scholarship, criticism, and training. Moreover, since one does not give money for solving social problems to individuals, social and cultural organizations became the principal beneficiaries of cultural support. In this respect, it is interesting to speculate about the extent to which cultural policy has inspired more creativity in fund raising than in the making and performing of art. Perhaps Berman had something like this in mind when in 1979 he wrote that "in the fourteen years since the inception of this agency, and after the expenditure of the better part of a billion dollars, *we are hard put to name a single work of art worth recollecting that it has made possible.* Nor can we associate its support with a productive idea affecting the understanding of art either by artists or their audience."[4] This encompassing judgment, of course, includes the Endowment's Artists-in-Schools program, its premier educational venture.

But then, it might be asked, why worry? Haven't the arts been shamefully neglected, and thus isn't anything at all done for them worthwhile? The reason for expressing concern is the harm done to our thinking about the nature of art, on the one hand, and about the way we think we can solve social problems on the other. When art undergoes redefinition as a social service, as something intended to relax, soothe, and entertain,

when it becomes essentially the institutionalized expenditure of funds, then it can no longer be what works of genius have persuaded us that it is; it is no longer the expression of a unique vision and the embodiment of significant values. Set aside are art's distinctive meanings, contexts, history, and special excellences. And when all of this is granted the conclusion is unavoidable; it is, says Berman, that "art has no particular value in itself."[5] Rogena Degge suggested that I might address some of the problems of politicizing arts education. This, I think, is the major problem; the tendency to corrupt the very concept of art itself and in effect to be anti-art. The politicizing of the arts and arts education then cannot be a matter of indifference.

To be sure, social problems are real and require attention. I am not denying that. I have simply raised questions about how they are addressed and what happens when one tries to use the arts to solve them. Once more, one can't have it both ways: Art cannot be an object the appreciation of which demands undivided attention and rare sensibility *and* a powerful social lubricant. We accordingly do well to recall from time to time that artists and works of art have no inherent social or political function to perform. In her essay on Plato's ideas about art, Iris Murdoch,[6] the British novelist and philosopher, writes that while art may be far and away the most educational thing we have, art as such has no formal social role to play and serves us well when artists simply create the very best and most beautiful art of which they are capable. At a time when many theorists of art and education are advocating the political uses of art, it's important to recall art's inherently nonutilitarian and aesthetic character.

To repeat, the politicizing of art and arts education, the framing of policy in social welfare terms, and the use of art as a social lubricant obscure the fact that art is a distinctive human activity with a history of distinguished accomplishment, standards of excellence, and capacity to provide worthwhile experiences merely in being looked at, listened to, or read.

It is apparent that the politicizing of art casts art in an instrumental role and not only in the senses just mentioned. The arts have also been believed capable of bringing about general school reform and the revitalizing of all teaching and learning. Such a premise was central to the policies of a number of governmental and cultural organizations in the sixties and seventies, notably the then Office of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, the JDR 3rd Fund, CEMREL, Inc. (an educational laboratory), and other groups which allied themselves with these organizations. The approach to arts education favored by these groups was called the arts in general education and comprehensive arts education, and its rhetoric lingers on in the Arts, Education, and Americans, Inc., which has recently merged with the American Council for the Arts.

A few examples will convey the character of a comprehensive arts education approach.[7] In a description of purportedly exemplary pedagogy, we read that sixth-grade pupils were inspired by a master drummer and dancer from Ghana first, to make African art of their own and then, because of the influence of African art on the cubism of Picasso, to make works in his style as well, whereupon the idea surfaced of reproducing a

World War I airplane that promptly stimulated the writing and staging of a play about the Red Baron of *Peanuts* cartoon fame. Yet another class is reported to have used effectively visiting dancers in learning the mathematical concepts of acute and obtuse angles by having the dancers imitate relevant shapes. Still another account, this time of a social studies class, described how a variety of arts—posters, placards, bands, actors, singing groups—were used to reenact Teddy Roosevelt's last press conference.

I'll forego the breathlessness, awe, and wonder with which these examples of the arts in general education were recorded and merely quote one writer's conclusion about the social studies event: "Music, visual arts, media, and theatre were used as the *means* of learning history. This is an example of what is meant by the phrase 'the arts in general education.' Attaching the arts to education in the basics can revitalize all learning and, at the same time, improve the status of the arts in the American schools. . . ."[8] That improving the status of arts instruction was not the real objective, however, is evident in the remarks of another advocate of the approach in question who states that the principal aim of an arts in general education approach is to overcome the status quo of schools by altering teaching and learning generally; the approach, it is said, is "fundamentally a way to change or develop schools through the arts."[9] These remarks are from a section in a chapter called "Belling the Cat," but in truth they let the cat out of the bag. For upon reading the literature in question we discover that the arts in general education idea is not really about art, about its distinctive excellences, its history of achievement, its capacity to induce worthwhile experience, but general school reform, along the lines, moreover, of British informal education which made educational headlines in the sixties.[10]

As the examples I've cited indicate, the Artists-in-Schools program of the National Endowment for the Arts was enlisted in the reform movement in question. As part of comprehensive arts education programs, visiting artists were believed capable of raising the "energy levels" of teachers, learners, principals, and janitors alike, not to mention the whole community with whom schools were to share artists. Artists were characterized as powerful catalysts of change who could contribute to "a context for a euphoric kind of synthesis, in which better, richer, more profoundly humanizing education"[11] could occur. Such rhetoric, it should be pointed out, and other samples I forbear quoting, is not the flimflam of Madison Avenue hucksters. It is written by those who hold advanced degrees and occupy influential posts in business, the government, and the university — persons who have been the beneficiaries of the very best education this country has to offer. And this is why the task of criticism, as Barzun put it, must consist of plumbing the ignorance of the highly educated and the anti-intellectualism of the intellectual, and why we must repulse their confident destructive follies, to borrow an expression from F.R. Leavis.

The Bureaucratizing of Policy

But the folly does not end with the sentimentalizing and politicizing of policy; there is also the bureaucratizing of policy to contend with, about

which I will be mercifully brief. The bureaucratizing of policy consists of the substitution of procedure for substantive accomplishment, or at least its almost eternal delay. Endless studies, position papers, reviews, meetings, conferences, panels, commissions, and recommendations for more of the same are its characteristic activities. The net effect is a scandalous waste of resources and human energy, a realization not lost on one reviewer[12] of the Rockefeller report, *Coming to Our Senses*, who observed of its 17 pages of recommendations that instead of a panel and a cast of hundreds that it took to produce them, not to mention the $300,000 the report is reputed to have cost, one experienced administrative assistant working a long weekend for $100 a day with pencils could have thought them all up and written them down. Not only that, the reviewer said that the welter of recommendations was enough to make even a New Dealer blanch.

The Fashionabilizing of Policy

I had thought of calling this mistake of policy behavior the celebritizing of policy, but I didn't want to be held accountable for coining such a term, even though it is descriptive, whereas there is a precedent for using fashionabilizing; in an essay on quality in the avant-garde the late Harold Rosenberg[13] used it to explain what happened when the avant-garde ran out of ideas — it fashionabilized itself.

By fashionabilizing I mean the transformation of the arts and arts education into show business and their association with the stars of politics, business, and entertainment. One example of what I mean will suffice.

At recent high-level meetings in Washington, talks on arts education have been given by an eminent New York music critic and publisher, the head of an Oscar-winning government agency, a member of a famous family noted for its political and philanthropic activities, and the education director of a prestigious private trust. At one meeting the question addressed was whether the public schools are after all the proper place to teach art to the nation's young. Any sensible educator would have pointed out that this is the wrong question, but then arts educators tend not to get invited to these affairs. In the high circle of cultural policymaking, educators have little credibility.

The danger in fashionabilizing cultural and educational affairs is that culture itself will be transformed into show biz, with all its glamour and hype—with a night, say, of glitter and relaxation at Kennedy Center. And, in truth, there is reason to believe that this is largely the capital city's concept of culture, at least according to Charles Frankel[14] who served for two years as Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural and Educational Affairs during the Johnson administration. Other meanings of culture held by officials in Washington, Frankel discovered, were people-to-people relations, the dead hand of the past, and cultural lag, i.e., the distance between developed and developing nations. The term culture being in his title Frankel said that he was unusually privileged to discover the capital city's meanings of this word.

Fashionabilizing has other consequences; it makes keeping up difficult, for cultural and educational fashions come and go every few years. I

recently examined a state art education guide that began with the ideas and rhetoric of the sixties, proceeded to accommodate the notion of basic education that was a reaction to this freewheeling decade, then featured one of the major themes of arts education in the seventies, but hadn't quite caught up with the eighties which are dancing to yet a different tune. It mattered little, if it was noticed at all, that the rhetoric, ideas, and suggestions were often contradictory, for the first commandment of all cultural and educational agencies is to be modern. Failure to acknowledge the latest thing might after all mean forgoing approving nods and grants from new funding groups.

Such remarks, and I must emphasize this, are not made with a view to tarnishing reputations or to taking easy advantage of persons who really aren't hired to be reflective about what they do. Far from being personal or ad hominem, they are about tendencies which ensnare us all but of which because of immediate preoccupations we are not always aware. Responsible criticism has an obligation to try to understand these tendencies and to describe their consequences. It is with this function in mind that I have alluded to some mistakes of policy thinking. How to correct these mistakes should be obvious: it would consist of the *de*sentimentalizing, the *de*politicizing, the *de*bureaucratizing, and the *de*glamourizing of policy thinking and behavior.

Reflecting about Art

The mistakes of policy thinking I've just set out clearly indicate that there is no greater need at the present moment than to become more reflective about the nature of art and its characteristic functions. I think we would do well to think of works of art as performing three important roles: they afford a high level of aesthetic experience; they stimulate direct perception for its own sake; and they yield enlightenment in distinctive ways.

Such views of art's functions are featured in a number of aesthetic theories, but I choose only three for purposes of illustration here—the theories of Monroe C. Beardsley, Harold Osborne, and Nelson Goodman. All three writers exemplify the ideal of disinterested scholarship and the search for a better understanding of human knowledge and value.

The central theme of Beardsley's writings[15] is that works of art are preeminently suited to induce a high level of aesthetic experience in qualified percipients; or, as he began to put it in his later writings, works of art have the capacity to give a marked aesthetic character to human experience. This capacity of artworks he calls their aesthetic value, and he advances an instrumental theory of aesthetic value which holds that a work of art is instrumental to the causing or bringing about of aesthetic experience in a beholder. A disposition to experience art aesthetically, moreover, is further instrumental to the strengthening of other human values we think are important, such as the refinement of perception and the stretching of the imagination. In contrast to a misconstrued instrumentalism, this is instrumentalism properly construed.

According to Beardsley, the most notable features of aesthetic experience are object directedness, detached affect, felt freedom, active discovery, and personal wholeness or integration, though not all five features

need always be present for experience to have an aesthetic character. But whatever its composition at a given time, aesthetic experience is inherently gratifying and constitutes a valuable state of human well-being. Art is thus the source of a distinctive kind of value, aesthetic value, or at least it tends to possess such value in greater concentration than other things.

A sense of the way Beardsley views aesthetic experience may be gained by imagining various stretches of time during a day spent rising in the morning, departing for work, working itself, returning from work, and attendance at a Mozart concert in the evening. All of these segments may be tinged with aesthetic character, but doubtless the time spent listening to Mozart will bear the marks of the aesthetic more than the other segments.

In contrast to the practical necessities that condition most aspects of a working day, the experience, say of listening to Mozart's Piano Concerto in D Minor, will be marked by a willingly accepted guidance over the succession of one's mental states by the unfolding of the music's material, states which possess, among other things, a feeling that things are working themselves out in appropriate and fitting ways. Once again, during aesthetic experience there is likely to be a release from the pressing concerns that preoccupied one during the day and which will surely return upon the morrow. Such feelings further conduce to a sense of rapport with what is presented, but not to the point of losing oneself completely in the music. Aesthetic interest implies awareness of a special kind of object contrived for perception, and this encourages a degree of detachment, detached involvement as it is sometimes called. In short, we experience the Concerto in D Minor at a certain emotional distance. But far from feelings of rapport inducing mere reverie, aesthetic perception is active, constructive, and exhilarating, especially as potentially conflicting stimuli cohere and the mind renders musical elements, relations, and qualities intelligible. All of these feelings and sensations, moreover—again feelings of object directedness, freedom and harmony, detached affect, active discovery—may further give rise to a sense of personal wholeness or integration, a feeling that may result in greater acceptance and expansion of the self. To repeat: whenever such features cluster we have aesthetic experience, a state of gratified well-being that consists of the realization of a distinctive kind of human value.

Osborne[16] also stresses art as an important source of aesthetic value, but he departs from Beardsley in emphasizing not so much art's power to provide aesthetic gratification as its capability to stimulate direct perception for its own sake, or what he calls the powers of percipience. By "percipience" Osborne means that power of the mind that apprehends things directly without the mediation of analytical reasoning or discursive logic; it consists rather of moments of integrative vision in which elements and relations are perceived as part of larger configurations. That is, knowing that Mozart's concerto is a certain kind of musical composition and has a history of performance is not the same thing as moments of perception during which the concerto is perceived in its dramatic complexity. Since acts of integrative vision are demanded by works of art—this

is what it means to say that works of art demand to be experienced aesthetically—Osborne thinks that art serves us well in its fashion by stimulating direct perception. The problems of exact definition notwithstanding, we tend to regard any artifact as a work of art if it is capable of exercising, extending, and amplifying our powers of perception.

Osborne further thinks that the cultivation of percipience for its own sake is an important objective in an increasingly affluent society in which there is the danger that leisure will be used to dissipate rather than invigorate the mind. Nothing less than the quality of civilization itself is at stake in not refining perception and raising the level of aesthetic taste. It will not say much of an era that produced the conditions for a truly great civilization and then permitted itself to indulge forms which diminished rather than enlarged human awareness and potential. The implications of Osborn's ideas for policy are thus obvious.

If Beardsley's and Osborne's conclusions are reached via a theory of value and a line of aesthetic thinking that extends from the eighteenth century to the present, Goodman reaches his from the perspectives of recent work in the theory of knowledge or understanding. What is more, where Beardsley's and Osborne's theories are basically noncognitive, preferring to stress art's capacities for inducing aesthetic gratification and direct perception, Goodman's theory is emphatically cognitive.

Goodman's terminology is a clue to the difference. Aesthetic experience, he writes, "is dynamic rather than static. It involves making delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and characters within these systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world. Much of our experience and many of our skills are brought to bear and may be transformed by the encounter. The aesthetic 'attitude' is restless, searching, testing—is less attitude than action: creation and recreation."[17]

One notices in these remarks an emphasis on art as a symbolic system of human communication and its characteristic function of yielding understanding, or, as Goodman puts it, of reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world. While Goodman does talk about art's capacity for inducing cognition for the sake of cognition, which seems to imply aesthetic experience for the sake of aesthetic experience, and while he does not deny that aesthetic experience may be enjoyable or gratifying, he does not locate the criterion of the aesthetic in satisfaction or direct perception. Rather he locates it in certain symptoms definitive of art as a symbolic system, such symptoms as semantic and syntactic density, syntactical repleteness, and exemplification. These symptoms are about the ways works of art by featuring or displaying certain qualities may be said to refer to them and how labels meaning the same things as the qualities to denote them. Such denotation, moreover, is metaphorical. A sad tune that expresses sadness exemplifies sadness and is metaphorically sad.

With Goodman's theory of symbolic communication we enter upon technical philosophical ground that I dare say few policymakers will be inclined to tread, but there is no question that his impressive argument for art's

cognitive status is yet another source of reflective aesthetic wisdom that respects the distinctive character of art. No political axegrinding here or wild ideas about art as a catalyst of social or educational reform.

Some Basic Policy Questions

I have concentrated on some serious policy mistakes and the need to be more reflective about the nature of art because I think it's important to know where we've gone wrong. Most of these mistakes can be avoided if we ask some very simple questions.[18]

First of all, is a policy for arts education clear about its purposes and objectives, about the states of affairs it wishes to bring about or the dispositions it seeks to fashion? Second, is a policy for arts education a truly educational policy, or was it framed with a view to solving inherently social, political, or economic problems? Is an arts education policy, in other words, embedded in other policies? Third, insofar as a policy for arts education is inherently an educational policy, does it serve the distinctive domain purposes of arts education? Or is a policy construed instrumentally to help achieve the objectives of other school subjects, perhaps even general school reform? Fourth, if a policy is inherently an arts educational policy, is it responsive to the true complexity and difficulty of the arts; Is it, for example, adequate to the objectives of historical understanding, aesthetic appreciation, and critical judgment? Fifth, is it possible to hold someone accountable for a policy's formulation and implementation? Or are we content, as we are in so many other sectors of society today, to settle for the principles of a no-fault morality? And finally, were reasonable options entertained in considering the policy in question? Sometimes people just don't think about options but run with whatever is going around.

Taking all of these questions together, the first—are goals clearly articulated?—is perhaps the most important, for from a failure to answer it adequately all the other mistakes follow: the plethora of conflicting aims and purposes; the questionable uses of the arts amounting to abuses; the embedding of aesthetic objectives in social policies; the instrumental use of the arts to achieve nonaesthetic schooling results; the reluctance to be held accountable; the difficulty of assessment; and so forth.

We can improve our thinking about policy if we make an effort to ask distinctively *educational* questions and avoid being sidetracked by non-educational objectives. Most of all we must be clear about the states of affairs and dispositions we wish to attain. I am not talking about framing countless objectives in behavioral terms, but plain intelligence that has a sense of where it's going. Art must be clearly seen as a distinctive subject or area of study with historical, appreciative, and critical dimensions. Art, one of the supreme achievements of humankind whose powers for affecting thought and action have been remarked since antiquity and whose potency is especially attested by totalitarian societies in their attempts to control it, demands its own curriculum time and space. If we keep such considerations in mind, I think it is possible to frame a defensible policy for arts education that takes its leads from the capacity of the arts to afford worthwhile experience in the senses I have mentioned; that is,

the capacity of art to induce a high level of aesthetic experience, to stimulate the powers of percipience, and to yield understanding.

If there is any ground for optimism that policymaking for arts education might one day reflect these objectives, it is a discernible willingness in various sectors of society, including the arts education profession, to entertain substantive change. We are not apt to see another Rockefeller report like *Coming to Our Senses* — the big private sector news in arts education of the late seventies, nor are representatives of the National Endowment for the Arts likely to repeat the rhetoric of its recent past. And the reason for this is that policy criticism has matured and conveyors of nonsense are being held accountable.[19] Before, people could just sound off and say anything that came to mind.

A few concluding words now about proper roles for the public and private sector,[20] that is, in addition to the sector of the public school system.

The Public and Private Sectors

The lines between the public and private sectors should not, of course, be too sharply drawn. Rather we do well to adopt John Dewey's definition of a public as consisting of all those who organize on behalf of an interest that society has devalued and that henceforth will be looked after and advanced by elected officials representing the interest in question.[21] This is a fairly good description of the influential arts constituency we have today, which is composed of members from both public and private groups.

To restrict my discussion of the public sector to the National Endowment for the Arts, I think its most important educational role is to stand unwaveringly in support of excellence and high culture and to articulate as eloquently as it can the importance of a high level of culture to both the quality of individual life and the cultural health of the nation, indeed to democratic societies generally. This is more important than the size of its budgets and staffs, its artist-in-residence programs, or the depth of affection shown for the Agency.

I don't see that this view of the Endowment's educational role necessarily involves direct support of arts education in the schools or the use of state art councils as advocates for arts education. The politics, bureaucracy, and instability of agencies and cultural organizations inhibit significant long-term planning. The most I think I would favor by way of an Arts Endowment presence in arts education is the support of institutes for the upgrading of teachers of the arts in the schools, the articulating of model curricula, and the support of certain kinds of research. But even this is likely to have minimal long-term effect. And it's likely to be done more effectively by the National Endowment for the Humanities which has a history of such support and is more inclined to think in educational terms than the Arts Endowment. The Arts Endowment tends to think of art as a professional and performing activity and not a school subject. Logically, of course, the Department of Education should be the agency to formulate policies for arts education, but its notorious instability inhibits its effectiveness. In brief, much as I am sympathetic to many things Samuel Lipman[22] has recently said about an essentially educational role

for the Arts Endowment, I doubt its capability to play such a role. Let it espouse the cause of high culture and arts education and provide samples of model curricula for others to think about, but let the schools design and implement programs.

Regarding the private sector, I'll briefly mention two waves, as it were, which have influenced policy for arts education. The first originated in the early sixties and lasted until the late seventies, although remnants of it are still visible, and it made most of the mistakes I discussed earlier.[23] The mildest criticism that can be made of this wave is that it mistook humane intentions and good will for substance and excellence and was marred by the sentimentality and anti-intellectualism of well-educated amateurs. A harsher verdict is that it can be accused of bad faith in using the arts to try to ride into the schools a number of educational reforms favored in the sixties; as such it was not really serious about art and arts education and was in effect anti-art.

A second more recent wave of private sector activity holds promise for redressing past mistakes, even though it does not explicitly repudiate the first wave.[24] Instead of dreams about the arts sparking educational revolutions and images of artists as pied pipers, we find realism, seriousness, and intelligence. It believes that art should be taught as a demanding subject in its own right in a program of general education that aims at cultivating educated commerce with art. To accomplish this objective, it is realized that not only artistic activities but historical understanding, aesthetic appreciation, and critical judgment are important aspects of aesthetic learning. Nor does it ignore the educational establishment; instead, it prefers good working relations with educators. It is also attempting to bring educators and academic specialists together for the common purpose of improving aesthetic learning. Moveover, patience has been added to the virture of realism, seriousness, and intelligence; it is realized that arts education is not going to be transformed overnight. If the second wave I've mentioned can avoid the mistakes of the first, then it will have restored integrity to private sector involvements in arts education.

I said that policies should be framed not only with the quality of individual life but also with the cultural health of the nation in mind. There are a number of ways, I think, that intelligent cultural and educational policymaking can do this. It can, for example, contribute to social cohesiveness. When persons confront great masterpieces of art or attend outstanding cultural performances—very few of which would be accessible at all if some governmental or quasi-public body had not been interested in their preservation and presentation—these individuals are not only private individuals but also members of a *public* sharing the civilized values epitomized by the work in question. If we may be permitted to conceive of a public as the totality of persons who when experiencing works of high culture feel their membership in civilization reaffirmed, then government spending on the arts can be defended as in the public interest because civilized values are in the public interest.

Works of art are also a major part of a nation's cultural heritage and thus a source of continued history, glory, and pride. It is furthermore in a democratic society's interest to celebrate the freedom that artistic ex-

pression enjoys in an open society, a privilege, it should be pointed out more often than it is, that is denied most people around the globe. Finally, an appreciation of artistic activity in its true complexity may help, as Lionel Trilling[25] hoped it would, counteract the abstractness of ideological thinking.

Persons well prepared to appreciate and judge art are in other words capable of influencing the direction of culture and the tone and quality of life. Indeed the best way to diminish the need for federal support of the arts is not by trying to argue it away but by making people less dependent on it, by making them quasi-connoisseurs in their own right.[26]

In conclusion, let me recall what I have attempted to do. I said that we need to reshape policy in a manner consistent with the quality of life, the nature of art, and the cultural health of the nation. I expressed the belief that we are hampered in doing this by a number of mistakes which I have called the sentimentalizing, politicizing, bureaucratizing and glamourizing of cultural and educational relations. I then indicated what it means to be reflective about art and how asking a few basic questions can keep policy thinking sane. Finally, I made a few observations about the public and private sectors and how art may be understood to be compatible with the public interest and the general cultural health of the nation.

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Notes

1. Jacques Barzun, *The House of Intellect* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 21.

2. Saul Bellew, "Writers and Literature in American Society," in *Culture and Its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, ed. Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 172-73.

3. Ronald Berman, "Art vs. The Arts," *Culture and Politics* (Boston: University Press of America, 1984).

4. Ibid., p.133.

5. Ibid., p.144.

6. Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 86.

7. I have collected my observations about the approach in question in "The Arts in General Education Ideology: Some Critical Observations," *Art Education*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1983): 34-38.

8. Charles B. Fowler, "Integral and Undiminished: The Arts in General Education," *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 5 (January 1978), 30.

9. Jane Remer, *Changing Schools Through the Arts* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), p. 7.

10. See my "Learning through Art: An Essay Review of the Rockefeller Report *Coming to our Senses*," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (February 1979): 543.

11. See my "An Analysis and Criticism of the Artists-in-Schools Programs of the National Endowment for the Arts," *Art Education*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (September 1977): 12-19. The quotation is from testimony given before a House Committee on Select Education in the fall of 1975.

12. Roger Rosenblatt, *The New Republic*, Vol. 16, No. 27 (July 2, 1977):42.

13. Harold Rosenberg, "Avant-Garde," in *Quality: Its Image in the Arts* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 419-48.

14. Charles Frankel, *High on Foggy Bottom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 101-06.

15. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience" in *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays of Monroe C. Beardsley*, ed. Michael J. Wreen and Harold M. Callen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 285-97.

16. Harold Osborne, "Appreciation as Percipience," *The Art of Appreciation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 16-37.

17. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 241-42. For a discussion of some of the educational consequences of Goodman's ideas, see his *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 150-67.

18. I have discussed these questions at greater length in "Justifying Policy for Arts Education," *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1978): 37-42; and in "Formulating a Defensible Policy for Art Education," *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Autumn, 1984): 273-79.

19. For an excellent criticism of current policymaking for arts education, see Laura Chapman's *Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1982).

20. My remarks about the public and private sectors are drawn from my "Policy for Arts Education: Whither the Schools, Whither the Public and Private Sectors" Address to the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 1986.

21. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1927).

22. Samuel Lipman, "Cultural Policy: Whither America, Whither Government? *The New Criterion*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (November 1984).

23. A convenient locus for these mistakes is the Rockefeller report *Coming to Our Senses* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977).

24. Though it is not above criticism, I take the Getty Trust report *Beyond Creating* (Los Angeles: J.P. Getty Trust, 1985) to be representative of the second wave of private-sector involvement in arts education.

25. Lionel Trilling, "Preface," *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950).

26. This is my general response to Edward C. Banfield's *The Democratic Muse* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), which argues against federal subsidy of the arts.

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